

© 2007

James Todd Uhlman

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

GEOGRAPHIES OF DESIRE: BAYARD TAYLOR AND THE ROMANCE OF  
TRAVEL IN BOURGEOIS AMERICAN CULTURE, 1820-1880

By

JAMES TODD UHLMAN

A Dissertation submitted to the  
Graduate School-New Brunswick  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in History

written under the direction of

Professor Jackson Lears

and approved by

---

---

---

---

---

New Brunswick, New Jersey

October, 2007

## ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Geographies of Desire: Bayard Taylor and the Romance of Travel in Bourgeois

American Culture, 1820-1880

By JAMES TODD UHLMAN

Dissertation Director: T. J. Jackson Lears

This study explores the growth of bourgeois American society during the mid-nineteenth century. Phenomena such as colonialism, migration, international trade, industrialization, and print culture cut across geographic and political boundaries and were critical to the evolution of bourgeoisie. Complimenting these conditions were traditions of cosmological mythology and enlightenment ideals that produced a transnationalist, if not cosmopolitan, consciousness. Together these contributed to an acute awareness of mobility and spatial difference. Metaphors of travel captured the sense of personal transformation, possibility, and empowerment common within the cultures of bourgeois identity. The romance of travel and encounter became a powerful discursive and psychological devise for the construction and reproduction of bourgeois desires such as status, class cohesion, and social dominance in the fluid, socially ambiguous conditions of the day.

This study traces the significance of the romance of travel through a socially and geographically diverse gallery of individuals. It also examines the popular culture and institutions in which they participated. However, the narrative concentrates on the life of Bayard Taylor, a famed traveler, lecturer and writer of the day. Taylor serves as a representative figure. The journey of his rise to prominence, and the central role that a

cosmopolitan geography of desire played in his popularity, are illuminating. Taylor's banality makes him useful as a means to investigate how the popular racial, gender, and class ideas surrounding bourgeois selfhood intertwined with a broader consciousness of the world outside the United States. Taylor exemplifies the way the romance of travel was utilized to adapt to and succeed in America.

More broadly the study sheds light on the strident attitudes of American exceptionalism that persist despite a long history characterized by cultural dependence, global interconnection, and multiethnic complexity. It emerged out of the tensions surrounding parochial-cosmopolitanism within bourgeois culture: between the realities of the transnationalist context of its birth and the parochial aims of asserting hegemony over local surroundings.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The writing of this dissertation was made possible by the support of colleagues, friends and family. Much of what is good in this study comes from the guidance and wisdom of the committee that helped me complete it. I want to thank John Gillis, Matthew Jacobson, and Ann Fabian for their close readings and suggestions. All three have proven models of professionalism. John, thank you for demonstrating what it means to be a good educator. Ann, thanks for the energy and keen interest. Besides his many other contributions Michael Adas's warmth helped germinate this project: thanks for looking out for me. To Jackson Lears I owe a great debt. He took me as a student and guided me to the completion of the project. His labored readings of early drafts made all the difference. Thank you, Jackson, for being an intellectual inspiration.

I would also like to thank my many friends for their support. Matthew Guterl's advice and example have helped me avoid many pitfalls. Matt Wray and Jill Gurvey showed me how it is possible to be happy amid so much work. My dear friend Daniel Heins has shared with me a journey we began way back at Indiana University. Thanks for walking beside me Daniel. And there were many others who lent valuable moral support: Scott & Tina, Matt & Deb, Rob & Beth, Dorian & Myrna, Dave & Michelle, Sandy, and the Dobmeyer family. You have all been great.

Finally I would like to thank my family. To my mother and late father I am indebted for putting me in a position to pursue my education. My sisters and brothers Diana, Janice, Althea, DeWayne and Matt have provided continual love and support. Diana and her husband Jesse Dickson, in particular, have given me invaluable advice and encouragement—thanks for telling me I could do it.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to several people without whom it could never have been written. To the memory of my father Alfred “Corky” Uhlman, a man of remarkably playful imagination and affection. His joy for life inspired the sense of wonder that brought me to this topic. To my mother Virginia Uhlman: you have provided a model of constancy and determination that I drew upon when pursuing this dream. Like my father, you sacrificed in unimaginable ways to give me the opportunity to live this life—I cannot thank you enough. To my children, Genevieve and Julian: you came into my life and put it all into perspective. And finally to my wife Anne who kept me going when I thought this process was never going to end: like the earth you give me strength, like the water you quench my thirst, like the sky you shine joy upon my life and lift my soul.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgement	iv
Dedication	v
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: The Journey of Success:	35
Travel as Discipline and Enlightened Self-Improvement	
Chapter 2: Searching for Signs of Status:	90
Culture and the Passage to Middle-Class Gentility	
Chapter 3: Cultivating the Inner Self:	148
The Psychic Economy of the Romantic Hero	
Chapter 4: The Promise of Conquest:	209
Landscape and Progress	
Chapter 5: The Tranquility of Destiny:	260
Empire, Race and Commerce	
Chapter 6: The Sublimation of Passion:	338
Fantasies of the Exotic Other	
Chapter 7: The Longing for Authenticity:	397
Searching for the Primal Self	
Chapter 8: Celebrating Personality:	441
Harnessing the Primitive Impulse	
Conclusion: An End and a Beginning	503
Appendix A: Photographs and Illustrations	531

Appendix B: Archival, Photographic, and Illustration Acknowledgement	556
Curriculum Vita	557

## Introduction

Many Americans during the mid-nineteenth century displayed a deep fascination with the world outside of the United States. One example of this interest came in the growth of literature about foreign travel. “Authorship and traveling are all the fashion,” commented the Quarterly Review in 1829.<sup>1</sup> Only a few years before, Washington Irving had become America’s first great popular writer on the virtue of his tales of a young American’s adventures in England. It soon became common for authors to establish their reputation in a similar vein. Professional writers were hardly the only ones with pen in hand. Travelers pursuing business, in search of health, or seeking education, adventure, even leisure, showed a growing impulse to tell the world about their experiences. As the Reverend John Overton put it in 1854 as an apology of sorts for his own contribution to the field, “books of travel have multiplied of late with fearful rapidity, but still the vast amount of readers in our country creates a steady demand for such publications.”<sup>2</sup>

Newspapers throughout the land eagerly printed letters from locals traveling abroad.<sup>3</sup> A tiny sample might include the letters published in the New York Observer by the Albany Presbyterian clergyman William Buell Sprague in 1828. He regaled audiences with accounts of the celebrities he met.<sup>4</sup> In the late 1840s the businessman Henry Maney’s epistles to his hometown Nashville paper earned him fame in the city.<sup>5</sup> Readers of the St. Louis, Missouri Republican in 1850 enjoyed thirty-three letters describing the joys of Europe from their very own Anne Tuttle Jones Bullard.<sup>6</sup> A few years later under the pseudonym of Mr. Dunn Browne the clergyman Samuel Wheelock Fiske entertained his fellow Springfield, Ohio natives with wry descriptions of Europe and the Middle East.<sup>7</sup> So common were these productions that in 1852 a young mechanic

named Benjamin Moran wrote: “The Press has teemed of late with the works of American tourists, some artistic, some scientific, and others, again, of a more purely literary type.”<sup>8</sup> Not surprisingly his comment served as an introductory apology for his own series letters.

The quantity disturbed the tranquility of some. The founder and editor of the New York Tribune Horace Greeley, known for publishing his share of “traveling correspondents,” sometimes two or three at a time, nonetheless grew weary of the deluge. “I am sick of descriptive letters,” Greeley complained to a prospective contributor, “and will have no more of them.” Five years later he published his own.<sup>9</sup>

The truth of the matter was that the public simply loved them. By the mid-1870s residents of provincial outposts like Topeka, Kansas or tiny Bucyrus, Ohio could open their papers and see the world through the eyes of a local.<sup>10</sup> The practice had become so common that Moses F. Sweetser, a guidebook writer with reason to loathe competition, observed that newspaper editors now more commonly dismissed proposals for such letters than they accepted. The impulse to write them, he scornfully observed, was akin to disease: “among the thousands of our people who visit Europe every summer, many scores are afflicted by the catoethes scribendi.”<sup>11</sup>

The illness was not confined to Americans traveling in Europe. In the United States the nation’s first major international military engagement with the North African Muslim states along the Barbary Coast fanned an intense interest in the Mediterranean and the prodigious sales of books like James Riley’s 1817 captivity story An Authentic Narrative of the Loss of the Brig Commerce.<sup>12</sup>

In the 1830s travelers to the nearby Middle East began to pour forth books to satisfy spiritual obsession of their countrymen with the Holy Land.<sup>13</sup> Nearly twenty years later the missionary William Thompson published The Land and the Book, a perennial best-seller until the late nineteenth century, a work that at one time rivaled the sales of Uncle Tom's Cabin.<sup>14</sup> By then an Egyptomania had swept over the country leaving in its wake traces on American culture as diverse as the names given to scores of towns along the Mississippi to the mystical hieroglyphic in which The Book of Mormon was purported to have been written.

Thoughts of Asia, of course, were central to the impulse that had brought Europeans to the Americas. It continued thereafter to excite the imagination of many. The poet of the American Revolution Timothy Dwight linked the birth of the nation and its destiny to Far East Asia in 1780 when he wrote:

Hail Land of light and joy! thy power shall grow  
 Far as the seas, which round thy regions flow;  
 Through earth's wide realms thy glory shall extend,  
 And savage nations at thy scepter bend.  
 Around the frozen shores thy sons shall sail,  
 Or stretch their canvas to the Asian gale,  
 Or, like Columbus, steer their course unknown,  
 Beyond the regions of the flaming zone. [. . .]  
 For thee, proud India's spicy isles shall blow  
 Bright silks be wrought, and sparkling diamond glow;  
 Earth's richest realms their treasures shall unfold  
 and opening mountains yield the flaming gold.<sup>15</sup>

In subsequent years participants in the India and China trade, both central to the nation's early economy, produced a stream of narratives.<sup>16</sup>

Interest in Asia dovetailed with the growing obsession with the South Pacific. John Ledyard's 1783 book of his travels with Captain Cook, and U. S. naval captain

David Porter's 1815 Journal of a Cruise Made to the Pacific Ocean fascinated the public.<sup>17</sup> Dozens of accounts followed.<sup>18</sup>

Southward there were the rest of the Americas. Economic links had long focused North America interest on this region.<sup>19</sup> Later republican sensibilities were intrigued by the Latin American revolutions of the early nineteenth century. Accounts describing these events, like Isaac Foster Coffin's Journal of Residence in Chili, remained popular through the 1820s.<sup>20</sup> Supporters of the expansion of slavery showed curiosity in the Caribbean and Mexico. In the early 1840s the diplomat and archeologist John Lloyd Stephens—already famous for his travel to Egypt, Turkey and Greece—stirred popular fascination with descriptions of ancient ruins he found in Central America.<sup>21</sup>

Most Americans gained their first descriptions of equatorial Africa through articles and books detailing the horrors of the slave trade. Andrew Hull Foote's Africa and the American Flag was a perennial favorite.<sup>22</sup> Accounts by missionaries and explorers soon followed.<sup>23</sup>

All of the letters and books are an indication of the growing frequency of actual travel. Writing in Putnam's Magazine H. T. Tuckerman predicted that:

If the social history of the world is ever written, the era in which we live will be called the nomadic period. With the advent of ocean steam navigation and the railway system, began a traveling mania which had gradually increased until half of the earth's inhabitants, or at least half of its civilized portion, are on the move.<sup>24</sup>

This “civilized portion” included a good number of Americans, or at least that was how Tuckerman's fellow countrymen perceived it. To some like New York diarist Philip Hone it seemed that, “All the world (our world) is going to Europe.”<sup>25</sup> Observing the scene from the other side of the Atlantic, Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote:

Sitting, as it were, in a gateway between the Old World and the New, where the steamers and packets landed the great part of our wandering countrymen, and received them again when their wanderings were done, I saw that no people on earth have such vagabond habits as ours. [...] It seemed to me that nothing was more common for a young American than deliberately to spend all his resources in an aesthetic peregrination about Europe, returning with pockets nearly empty to begin the world in earnest.<sup>26</sup>

Margaret Sweat, a budding fiction writer from Portland, Maine, wrote in 1859, “A voyage to Europe is, in these days, so common an occurrence that its mention slips into conversation almost unnoticed.” “Traveling,” she went on to say, “seems to be the rule of Americans—and staying at home the exception.”<sup>27</sup> “The time has been when,” confided Hawthorne in his journal, “I meant to visit every region of earth, except the Poles and Central Africa. I had a strange longing to see the Pyramids. To Persia and Arabia, and all the gorgeous East, I owed a pilgrimage for the sake of their magic tales. And England, the land of my ancestors!”<sup>28</sup>

Those unable to journey abroad satisfied their curiosity through a variety of cultural venues. Children’s books of travel became a mainstay in the book publishing trade. Lectures about foreign lands and adventures were some of the most heavily attended of any lyceum schedule. Hundreds of vast moving panorama paintings of world travel toured the country and drew millions of customers. In the early nineteenth-century dozens of dime-museums first sprang into existence in the nation’s cities and the central features of these institutions were exhibits of distant and unknown nations and people. An innumerable variety of exotic performances, demonstrations and exhibits entertained audiences. Plays and operas frequently relied upon the allure of exotic themes and prominently featured foreign artists. Finally, consumers demonstrated a growing preoccupation with foreign styles in architecture, clothing and decorative goods.

The cause of this increased interest can be generally attributed, at least as an opening observation on the topic, to the transportation revolution that swept both Europe and the United States in the first half of the century. With the introduction of steam trains and ships the movement of people, material goods, and of culture greatly accelerated. So too, of course, did the opportunity for travel. Hone, writing while on his way home from Europe aboard the new transatlantic steamer, described the impact the new technology was having.

Everybody is so enamored of it that for a while it will supersede the New York packets—the noblest vessels that ever floated in the merchant service. Our countrymen, ‘studious of change and pleased with novelty,’ will rush forward to visit the shores of Europe instead of resorting to Virginia or Saratoga Springs; and steamers will continue to be the fashion until some more dashing adventurer of the go-ahead tribe shall demonstrate the practicality of balloon navigation, and gratify their impatience on a voyage over, and not upon, the blue waters in two days instead of as many weeks.<sup>29</sup>

The technological changes, however, were only part of much broader developments which made this new phase in global interconnection during the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries possible. In the years before 1750 Western expansion had produced a system of coerced labor, enforced migration and the creation of exploitative relationships between local and western economies.<sup>30</sup> According to historians of globalization like A. G. Hopkins over the next hundred years an increasing sophistication in global finance and the enhanced capacity of both formal and informal modes of imperialism accelerated growth of networks of exchange in goods, culture and ideas as well as labor. Prior to the outbreak of the Napoleonic wars in 1792 trade out of Europe and North America underwent a strong outward orientation.<sup>31</sup> After Waterloo this trend resumed, led by the free trade policies of England and the astounding reduction in internal transportation costs within the industrializing nations.<sup>32</sup>

One consequence was the growth in the consumption of foreign goods. Imperial expansion during this period brought European control over the economies of Asia. By mid-century the majority of world's shipping, and thus exchange of goods, was controlled by western nations. American vessels carried a substantial portion of this trade. This allowed for greater access and reduced cost. The combined result was a commodity price convergence in much of Europe and the United States. The price of goods from within the nation but also from around the world dramatically dropped across the United States.<sup>33</sup>

In Springfield, Illinois one wintry February evening in 1858 Abraham Lincoln vividly described the way the nation's growing commercial links with the world was felt in the everyday lives of his fellow citizens. In his lecture "Inventions and Discoveries" he reminded his audience just how close they as Americans had come to distant quarters of the globe.

Men, and things, everywhere, are ministering unto 'Young America.' Look at his apparel, and you shall see cotton fabrics from Manchester and Lowell; Flax-linen from Ireland; wool-cloth from Spain; silk from France; furs from the Arctic regions, with a buffalo-robe from the Rocky Mountains, as a general outsider. At his table, besides plain bread and meat made at home, are sugar from Louisiana; coffee and fruits from the tropics; salt from Turk's Island; fish from Newfoundland; tea from China, and spices from the Indies. The whale of the Pacific furnishes his candle-light; he has a diamond-ring from Brazil; a gold-watch from California, and a Spanish cigar from Havana.<sup>34</sup>

Not surprisingly by the late 1840s there was simultaneously the beginning of steady growth of American exports.<sup>35</sup> By the late 1870s, the point at which this study ends, the importance of world trade to the nation was taken for granted. As one foreign observer noted about attitudes in the United States, in 1876 "interest in [foreign] trade has now become general."<sup>36</sup>

To those like Hone and Lincoln the increase in the movement of commerce and humans was a sign of a new era in the progress of the human race. The intellectual and material connections were creating new bounds between people. The spread of consumption produced spheres of common experience. Print, for instance, transcended geography as well as national borders to create a shared set of ideas across Western Europe, the United States and later Asia. But print overlapped with other examples—such as coffee, tea, tobacco and sugar—to create what the historian of empire C. A. Bayly has called a “revolution of socialibility.”<sup>37</sup> Patrons of Paris, London and New York coffee houses consumed beverages brought to them by international trade while discussing ideas generated in a transnational culture of print.<sup>38</sup> In short, the emergent material and cultural identity of at least some in the society was interwoven by the realities of globalization. For many the result was a growing awareness of the world.

### **Bourgeois America and the Romance of Travel**

The emergent bourgeoisie—those whom Hone termed the “go-ahead” tribe—of Western Europe and the United States played a critical role in this new phase in globalization and the growing popular fascination with the world. The bourgeoisie were a diverse social group whose essential characteristics, as well as the conditions out of which it arose, cut across political and geographic boundaries. Whether in England, France, Germany or the United States, being bourgeois involved participation in transnational phenomena: market economics, consumerism, post-Enlightenment values and industrial capitalism.<sup>39</sup> These forces led bourgeois identity to evolve around a highly developed awareness of movement and comparative vertical and horizontal spatial

sensitivity. This included an alternating tendency towards identification, appropriation, reformulation and rejection of other peoples across geographic boundaries.

In recent decades historians have firmly established the importance within the United States during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries of the upper class—those who possessed in some combination a substantial degree of economic, political or cultural capital—in the rise of international trade and culture exchange. Michael O'Brien's recent study Conjectures of Order demonstrated that pervasive international links existed among planters and colonial elite of antebellum southern society. Northern merchants, bankers, professionals and cultural elites were at least as concerned with the world as their southern counterparts. Dozens of studies have traced the intellectual links between American cultural elite, Europe, and the rest of the world.<sup>40</sup> More recently studies by Melani McAlister and Bruce Kuklick have shown northern intellectuals such as New England ministers who, interested re-establishing the literal truth of the Bible against the rise of “higher criticism,” were drawn into an engagement with the Middle East as part of their attempt to affect the shape of domestic culture.<sup>41</sup> Daniel Rodger's Atlantic Crossing described an equivalent engagement with Europe by reformers in the later half of the nineteenth-century.<sup>42</sup>

In Conjectures of Order O'Brien notes that interest with the world extended beyond the relatively small circle of southern upper class. That was even more the case in the North. There the broader state of prosperity, international trade, urbanization, immigration and influence of popular culture created conditions that fostered an awareness of the outside world. Indeed, interest in travel and the foreign was also strong among members of the nation's middle classes or petite bourgeoisie. By the early part of

the nineteenth century upper classes were increasingly beginning to share a set of values, tastes and behavior with those who had once constituted the “middling sorts” of the older social order.<sup>43</sup> For this growing segment of the bourgeoisie, economic prosperity and social democratization had increased their opportunities, ambitions and influence. The core of the petite bourgeoisie were proprietors of smaller retail, wholesale or manufacturing operations. Others were employed by businesses as skilled workers, business managers and clerks. The growing number of state employees, lawyers, doctors and engineers also helped swell the ranks of the middle class. Journalists, educators and artists composed another branch. Many of the latter commanded respect not as a result of wealth but due to their role in civil society and as valued facilitators of embourgeoisment. Finally there were the less wealthy and influential of the nation’s clergy and established gentry who, while not central to the emerging economy, held a residual degree of prestige due to their status within the older social order.

What gave this heterogeneous bourgeoisie its unity was a series of traits. They engaged in non-manual labor and thus were distinguished from the broader laboring masses.<sup>44</sup> Their status as non-manual labor depended upon their use of economic, educational or cultural capital. The petite bourgeoisie may have lacked the sort of resources available to the upper class they were nonetheless relatively prosperous and educated compared to the majority of the society. Finally the bourgeoisie shared a constellation of attitudes and ideas which made membership in it as much a state of mind as a clearly defined set of socio-economic practices or conditions: a sense of social aspiration or anticipation frequently linked to the optimistic self-disciplining message of

Protestantism; post-Enlightenment faith in rationality, natural law, and materialism; and an acceptance of political, social, and economic liberalism.<sup>45</sup>

In the United States it was the petite bourgeoisie, due to the size of the market they represented, who drove the industry in knowledge about the world. The Reverend John Overton, Benjamin Moran, and Margaret Sweat were the sort of people who read Putnam's Magazine and the Tribune. Prosperity placed this group at the epicenter of the growing network of commerce, industry, and consumption that increasingly tied America with Europe and even Asia. Literacy drew them into the print culture and the larger public sphere it helped produce. Among other results these connections weakened the disapproving attitude toward all things foreign that had lingered since the Revolution.<sup>46</sup>

Members of this group espoused desires that echoed those of the upper class. The New York Presbyterian clergyman and editor Samuel Irenaeus Prime wrote "For years my heart had yearned for the foreign tour, till at times I felt as if I must go or die." "To see the world," he added, "had grown to be a passion."<sup>47</sup> Contemplating his departure for Europe with friends in 1851 the Nashville businessman Henry Maney wrote simply that "the passion of our life was about to be gratified."<sup>48</sup> Nantucket librarian Maria Mitchell told friends "that from her earliest childhood [she] had had a great desire to travel to Europe."<sup>49</sup> And of course many of them, like Pottsville, Pennsylvania physician Charles H. Haeseler, shared their journey with neighbors by publishing descriptions in local papers like the Miner's Journal.<sup>50</sup> The accumulated effect was that even as most in the emergent middle class could still only aspire to travel abroad like their wealthier countrymen, by the later half of the century a taste and understanding for the foreign had, as Sweat suggested, become desirable and even expected within a wider segment of

American society. Many vicariously incorporated the experiences of those who did. Aspiring young men such as Camden, New Jersey native Isaac Mickle avidly attended lectures and read books of lands he would never see. Indianapolis, Indiana businessman Calvin Fletcher displayed a life-long interest in the world outside the United States even as he practiced law, speculated on land, and pursued a variety of business ventures along the frontier of the nation.

Explanations of why the bourgeoisie were interested in the world are varied and complex. The simplest answer was that they were among the few who held the resources necessary to pursue economic ventures abroad, indulge in foreign travel, or consume foreign made products. And yet this inadequately explains the extent of interest and contact with the world that had developed by the mid-nineteenth century. The principal thesis of this study answers this question. Themes of movement and space occupied an important place in bourgeois consciousness. They reflected key dimensions of its ideology and sense of identity. The principal values and desires of the bourgeoisie frequently found expression in metaphors of travel and encounter. Narratives involving movement and interaction with distant peoples powerfully highlighted the themes of transformation and became central to the bourgeois ideology. They also provided an effective basis upon which to fashion arguments of comparative identity and self-worth. Thus while the new technological, commercial and social developments were a necessary condition for this new social group's interest in either travel or other lands and people, they provide only part of the explanation. Beneath the travel mania lay an impulse among bourgeois society in particular that was as much creator as creation of the growth in trans-oceanic travel and trade.

Why was it that travel and encounter with foreign peoples held such powerful symbolic significance for the emergent bourgeoisie in Europe and the United States? First of all the conditions of mobility and transformation were integral to the social milieu in which the bourgeoisie arose. The social opportunities into which the bourgeoisie emerged were in large part dependent upon actual development of commercial networks and imperial expansion. The manipulation to one's advantage of extended market networks, exploitation of distant resources and willingness to transplant oneself became critical to personal betterment within society. Economic and social improvement was directly linked to the movement through and control over space. Belief in the possibility of personal mobility was central to the liberal values of this new segment of the society.

As the ideology of bourgeois society evolved, the figurative or metaphoric examples of travel and encounter became intertwined with the language of success. They also became then a means to achieve mastery over the uncertainties of a changing social context. The mythology of renewal—deeply entwined with language of mobility and transformation—has long had particular redolence in Western civilization. Like other cultures, western mythological traditions have interpreted the shift from one space to another cosmologically, as equivalent to change in states of being. Distant voyages were viewed as transformative event. Beginning with the pagan traditions that viewed travel as a passage towards rebirth; through the Judeo-Christian interpretation of journey as a metaphor for salvation; to the Enlightenment assumption that movement frequently represented a transition from old to new, past to present, or ancient to modern; travel has been symbolic of renewal.<sup>51</sup>

The American bourgeoisie in particular found the themes of movement and space highly resonant. North American attitudes towards the importance of space and movement were enhanced because of its origin as settler colonies. For the original immigrants who set out to create a new life for themselves, the journey involved palpable uncertainties. Their strange destination possessed real dangers. And yet the process of travel to North America symbolized possibility and hope as well. These conditions were continually reinforced by expansion into the west and the successive waves of immigrants. This heritage influenced American receptivity to teleological cosmologies of transformation through travel. The mythological tradition of renewal bore particular importance within the American Puritan's vision of salvation and the later republican ideology inspired by the Enlightenment. Both encouraged a Manichean comparison between America and the rest of the world; both also fostered a millennialist tradition; both heightened in the imagination the importance of the "new world" and the symbolic burden carried by the "old world" left behind.

Conversely, just as they looked forward to a new world in which they would recreate themselves, as inhabitants of a colony on the fringe of European civilization, Americans were accustomed to looking back to Europe for cultural guidance. In the organization of their daily lives immigrants to America sought to replicate many of the aspects of the society they had known at home. This encouraged the nostalgic mystification of Europe as the distant, long lost home, and source of meaning. Because London was the source of political power and authority many American elites traveled to England for education and establishing influential connections. Eager to be taken seriously they sought to emulate fashions they saw abroad.

The evolution of bourgeois identity in both Europe and the United States was also influenced by a powerful countertendency to these shared transnational links.<sup>52</sup> The social and political ambiguities of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries produced an emphasis upon the creation of new social borders, limits, and hierarchies within society. Dovetailing with these needs, the growth of economic competition and imperial expansion encouraged international rivalries and thus the evolution of nationalist ideologies. These parochial tendencies, however, emerged within the transnational cultural consciousness. The bourgeoisie drew heavily upon a comparative approach to fashion a cultural logic of identity and self-worth.

In the United States, for example, members of the heterogeneous bourgeoisie felt themselves precariously perched at the head of an unsteady social order of which they were assuming the role of stewards.<sup>53</sup> It was perhaps the petite bourgeoisie or middle class who felt caught between a disappearing rural, agrarian society and a newer but not yet fully formed way of life characterized by market relations, industrial production and urbanization. As a group they were part by-product and part producer of this emerging society. Just as the world they were creating remained half formed, their sense of identity as individuals and a class straddled the past and the future.<sup>54</sup> Ambiguity and the needs to establish social dominance encouraged a countervailing parochialism within bourgeois culture. The evolution of such attitudes served the principal preoccupation of the upper and new middle class: the development of a culture compatible with the material conditions of the liberal nation state in which they emerged and one that would simultaneously serve as an ideology to secure their social domination.

As the new middle class looked to fashion a stable social order and establish a basis of their individual status within their fluid society, they borrowed from the older American elite from whom they inherited a tendency borrow foreign notions of taste and civility. Yet they also acquired a defensive attitude. The tendencies of emulation generated a profound sense of dependence and inferiority. The elite of the colonial and early republic periods were eager to distinguish themselves from their European counterparts, whom they could not hope by the standards of birth to equal. Yet at the same time they were acutely concerned with gaining the respect and authority of their powerful brethren in England. This led them to emulate European fashions. They passed these contradictory traits on to the burgeoning new middle class. Some of the figures who were part of this elite, like Phillip Hone and George Templeton Strong, will appear in this study, as will others who as cultural custodians played an important role in the transference of values from the older elite: those like Emerson, Longfellow, and Hawthorne. The behavior and beliefs of these Americans encouraged a fascination with the outside world in those most eager to join them at the head of society.

Rather than simply narrowing bourgeoisie interests, the exigencies of establishing command over society channeled the wider consciousness of the world toward competitive nationalistic attitudes. While the Enlightenment had fostered values that eventually tied together people in disparate locations, at the same moment it circulated complimentary notions of social contracts and citizenship that facilitated ideas of unique political and geographic identity.<sup>55</sup> To many the emerging nation-state rapidly became a spatial framework for the conceptualization of movement so central to their identity.

Travelers served a central role in the evolution of the nation state and of bourgeois social dominance by facilitating empire and comparative ideologies. The growing importance of empire to the strength of the nation state led to new forms of historical, geographic and ethnographic knowledge. These served to advance commercial interests and colonial control. They also contributed to claims of distinct national identities. Information regarding trade supplied by travelers facilitated the construction and expansion of markets. Massachusetts captain Amasa Delano's 1817 descriptions of his twenty years in the Canton trade provided the sort of practical information needed by others.<sup>56</sup> Ethnographic and statistical information improved imperial administration.<sup>57</sup> Finally the comparative and competitive systems of knowledge helped establish ideas of racial and cultural difference that justified social hierarchies within nations, and harden claims of national distinctiveness.<sup>58</sup> Governments increasingly supported missions of exploration because of the believed links between geographic knowledge, commerce and state power. By mid-century the United States had sent forth expeditions to Jordan, the Nile, the African Coast, the Amazon, the Arctic, Alaska, the South Pacific and Asia.<sup>59</sup>

In the examples above both Hone and Lincoln framed the growth in contact with the world in nationalistic language. It is a commonplace of the day to observe that many Americans of this era saw their nation as the center of technological, commercial, and moral development that was bringing the world closer together.<sup>60</sup> The nation's importance was often described as a byproduct of its restlessness: its boundless energy for change and improvement. By virtue of its ceaseless mobility the United States was leading the progressive march of civilization. Americans were not only the most traveled of peoples but as a result were key members of that "civilized portion" of the human race

which was creating the network of global trade. Mobility was widely regarded as synonymous with America.

Thus while bourgeois Americans possessed a strong inclination towards identification with and appropriation of the cultural values of others, at the same time the expediency of mastering their local environment forced an emphasis upon a self-conscious parochialism. It is not the same as making an argument of American exceptionalism to simply point out that this self-consciousness was particularly powerful in the United States where the dependence upon European sources of cultural identity and the influence of the millennialist tradition was so extensive. Combined with the uncertainties described above, these conditions exacerbated the need to champion national uniqueness. The rise of cultural parochialism within the United States occurred because of, rather than in spite of, the nation's close ties with the rest of the world. These conflicting demands produced what could be termed a parochial-cosmopolitanism within bourgeois culture.

In sum then, beyond the transnational consciousness discussed earlier there was a powerful imaginative engagement by bourgeois Americans with the foreign. Because an emphasis upon movement was intertwined with aspects of bourgeois world view or ideology, travel and encounter provided a rationale, an expressive analogue, or a model of key bourgeois beliefs. Narratives of travel became weighted with objectives unrelated to the objective experience of the wider world. I refer to this disjunction as the "romance of travel." Romance was perhaps the dominant literary form in mid-nineteenth century America. The term commonly refers to stories with extravagant characterization, dramatic heroic action, elevated feeling, and exotic settings. It also applies to flights of

imagination concerned with higher truths or ideals, not restricted by a demand for verisimilitude. The form reserved the right to present truth, as Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote at the beginning of The House of the Seven Gables, in a fashion “of the writer’s own choosing or creation.”<sup>61</sup> In the fantasy life of Americans during the mid-nineteenth century the foreign was, as Hawthorne said of romance, “a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairyland, where the actual and the imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other.”<sup>62</sup>

### **Bayard Taylor and the Transnational Imaginary**

By way of demonstrating the above thesis the pages that follow have two principal objectives. The first is to reveal how key bourgeois beliefs were expressed through the romance of travel. Second, to demonstrate how individual Americans used the narratives to adapt to and succeed in the environment in which they lived.

To understand more precisely the relationship between bourgeois identity and the themes of travel and encounter this investigation is structured around the life of one of the most famed travelers of the period, Bayard Taylor.<sup>63</sup> Taylor was born in 1825 in Chester County, Pennsylvania, just outside of Philadelphia. His father had trouble finding his place in the changing and unpredictable economy of the day. The elder Taylor drifted from shopkeeping, to farming, and then following the devastating 1837 economic collapse, to serving as sheriff of the prosperous town of West Chester. Motivated in part perhaps by these failings his son was an ambitious boy. Bayard Taylor dreamed of attaining the financial security and the social prestige that eluded his father. He attended private academies until 1841 when he became a printer’s apprentice. In

1844 he published a book of poems that he sold by subscription and used the money to begin a trip to Europe.

Views A'Foot, the story of his two years of thrifty pedestrian travels through Europe, was the source of his first taste of fame. It brought him the friendship of some of the nation's literary elite. After a brief and unsuccessful stint at running a paper in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, Taylor parlayed the book's growing sales into a job working as a reporter at Horace Greeley's New York Tribune. In 1850 Greeley sent him to California to cover the Gold Rush. His popular letters were collected in Eldorado: Adventures on the Path to Empire. During these early New York years Taylor published two books of poems and frequented the city's artistic circles.

The death of Taylor's first wife, along with the desire of Greeley to obtain interesting letters of travel for the paper, led the young man on a two-year voyage to the Near and Far-East in 1851. On the first leg of his journey he traveled down the Nile into Ethiopia and across parts of the Egyptian desert. He then visited Palestine and traveled northward into Turkey. The popularity of his letters convinced Greeley to use his political influence in securing for Taylor a spot on Commodore Perry's expedition to Japan. Leaving the Near East, Taylor traveled across India and then on to China and Japan. The fruits of the voyage included three highly successful travel books and the popular Poems of the Orient.

By the time of his return in 1853 he had become a national celebrity. Demand for his lectures on the lyceum circuit was enormous. He left his position at the Tribune and for the next decade gave lectures to overflowing audiences. In the summer he traveled. He visited Scandinavia in 1856 and his Northern Travels proved another great success.

In 1859 he published descriptions of visits to Greece and Russia. These were followed in the next decade by three books of travels in the United States, another of European sketches, and in 1874 an account of his return to Egypt and Iceland. During these years he married again and built an estate near the family farm.

After 1863 while serving as the chargé d'affaires at the United States consulate in St. Petersburg, Taylor turned increasingly to other literary fields. He published four moderately successful novels, two volumes of short stories, edited six collections of travel writing, wrote a history of Germany and several books of long poetry, and completed an acclaimed translation of Goethe's Faust. Taylor's eclecticism was partly a response to pressing financial needs following a decline as a popular travel writer and lecturer. It was also due to his life-long desire to escape from his reputation as a roving reporter and replace it with the more dignified reputation of a serious poet. Driven by his own discontents he began to critically examine American society during these years. In a series of lectures he explored the nation's identity. Central to his arguments was a consideration of the nation's relationship to the rest of the world. During the same period he was also named a professor of German at Cornell University after giving a popular series of lectures on German literature. In 1876 he was asked to present the National Ode at the Centennial Celebration in Philadelphia. Two years later he was named the nation's first ambassador to Germany. He died there in 1879.

As this brief sketch reveals, Taylor had an extraordinary life. He clearly possessed many talents. Yet today he has been largely forgotten. Closer examination provides the reason. Reading his work, one is struck by the relative limits of his intellect and the banality of his aspirations. These apparent shortcomings provide the reason his

work offers so revealing a window on the popular culture of his time. When one considers the phenomenal success he enjoyed and his anonymity today, we are left to conclude that Taylor's great talent was in forging a strong connection with the audience of his day. His popularity makes his career a valuable historical artifact.

In addition, the make-up of his audience and the way they related to him heightens his usefulness as an historical tool for this study. Taylor's fans were drawn from those whose tastes lay somewhere between elite and popular cultures, a characteristic of the emerging middle class. Taylor himself served as a representative figure of this group. He shared with many of them the aspiration for economic advancement and social status. And like many of them he also felt inadequate, harbored ambivalence about the society around him, clung to self-serving beliefs, hid illicit longings, and feared the prospects of misfortune. Many of his beliefs and opinions were conventional, and resonated with the common wisdom of his audience.

Taylor's conventionality contributed to his popularity. His best known achievements were literally pedestrian. His fame as a writer and speaker rested in part on a simple, accessible style. Despite artistic ambitions that demanded something else from him, he never tarried too far from the outlook of his avid admirers. Nor did he abandon the sort of commercial endeavors that were the basis of his own social advancement. These compromises were simply another expression of his generally middle-class sensibility. At the same time he was a man who led an existence dreamed of by many in the middle class. He was a hero and an object of desire, a man in whom they readily attached their hopes.

On the whole, then, Taylor's life provides a fascinating index of bourgeois attitudes toward fame and class identity. But of more salience for this study is the way that public interest in Taylor revolved around the romance of travel and contact with foreign lands. In Taylor we have a representative figure of middle-class America on this subject. Taylor was either touched by or influenced the lives of many of those travelers mentioned earlier. In many ways his life served as a key nexus in a vast and complex web of ideas and material links that formed bourgeois America's consciousness of the outside world. Through Taylor we can discern the geographies of desire that connected the fascination with travel and foreign peoples to the lives of the middle class. Bourgeois Americans increasingly sought to gain social position, justifying their emerging power, and adjust their values and expectations to fit the demands exacted by the industrializing, market-driven, urban society of the day. They found travel narratives a convenient device to capture the sense of personal transformation they wished to experience. What follows are examples of particular ways in which Taylor and many others utilized the idea of travel, and their imaginings about other lands and people, to adjust to the realities of life at home. Part of this led to a stubborn support of nationalist attitudes. The lives of these individuals suggest that this was not because they were inward looking and culturally parochial, but rather that the expediencies of attaining control over their local environment led to an emphasis upon an exclusive nationalism. Taylor's life illustrates the way travel and attitudes towards other peoples were not governed by a single, monolithic ideology. Indeed the emotional, psychological, and practical function of both was frequently polyvalent and contradictory.<sup>64</sup>

Chapter one considers the relationship between the romance of travel and foreign lands and the Protestant ethos of restraint, determination, and self-improvement. Spurred by the failures of his father, Taylor was drawn into the hard driving spirit of aspiration for upward mobility and social prestige that he imbibed from books and saw in the environs of West Chester. Like others of the middle class eager for success, Taylor worked to contain the role of chance in his future through self-discipline. An avid reader of didactic children's travel tales, Taylor learned to see travel as an allegory of the marketplace, a means to master fate, and a mechanism for the attainment of success. And true to expectations his journey to Europe and the publication of Views began his mercurial rise. As a consequence for many he embodied the promise held-out by travel for the development of what was then called character.

In the years after the publication of Views, Taylor also became a prominent symbol of cultural refinement in the United States. The book displayed the result of years of self-directed study in art, literature, and poetry. Chapter two examines how Taylor's decision to go to Europe coincided with a growing awareness that such a journey was a symbol of status: that is, how the metaphors of travel and encounter were used to link refinement, or gentility, with piety and class identity. The life of Taylor and others discussed here reveals how the new middle class was adrift in a world of physical and social mobility. The older agrarian society had begun to decay. The new status that the middle class had begun to accrue was tenuous and they felt as if they lacked the legitimacy of the older elite. The pursuit of cultural refinement, or gentility, as a mechanism of social hierarchy promised a solution.<sup>65</sup> Increasingly they interpreted facility with aristocratically-inspired aesthetic tastes and behavior as a sign of social

station. Display of familiarity with Europe and its cultural refinements thus became a means of asserting status. For the anxious middle class it was a way to justify their growing power and guard porous class borders. It also satisfied their longing for a stable, unchanging, and thus seemingly secure world. Gentility was brought into an uneasy accord with the dictates of discipline and self-control. Moralists claimed that gentility required work, determination, and self-control. Cultivation, they also argued, reflected spiritual purity, and like economic success was a sign of God's favor. Travel served as a way of accumulating symbolic capital. It also served as a way of reframing gentility in terms acceptable to Puritan and republican values. Taylor accumulated cultural capital by studying art, poetry, and the appropriate emotional sentiments believed to reflect a superior nature. He used it all to strengthen his social position.<sup>66</sup>

Chapter three considers a subplot to the story told in chapter two: how both travel and encounter conveyed a longing for higher meaning through romantic self-realization. Even as he pursued success and status, Taylor, like others, grew leery of the world that was taking shape around him. Among some in the middle class there emerged a reaction to the dictates of discipline and the new industrial, urbanized society. The growing emphasis upon individual achievement engendered expectations of self-importance that were difficult to fulfill. Taylor cultivated a sense of distinctiveness by patterning himself on the romantic rebels like Byron who had begun to appear in Europe during the previous generation. This took the form of a tepid aesthetic and social rebellion against middle class culture. Both travel and poetry were keys to crafting this rebellious identity. At the center of this rebellion was the worship of an idealized self, one part inner purity and another metaphysical essence. Like those of the romantic heroes, Taylor's travels

symbolically distanced him from daily life. Travel was experienced by some as a transition in states of being that was alternatively imagined as escape from modernity or the liberation of the ideal self. For some Americans, as with Taylor, romantic selfhood provided a sort of sanctuary from the growing demands and disappointments of life. Ironically, by mid-century the persona of the romantic rebel became a valued commodity in the emergent middle class economy of culture. Aesthetic romanticism became so prized as a sign of distinctiveness that it was absorbed into middle-class culture.

Chapter four describes the bourgeois equation of liberty with possession. It begins with a description of how in the late 1840s Taylor moved to New York City where he worked as a journalist for Horace Greeley's Tribune. It explores the link in American consciousness between land, travel, and liberty. Taylor's move to New York had been necessitated by the bankruptcy of his newspaper venture. Though proclaimed the seat of opportunity in America, the vast, densely populated, and competitive city generated a sense of anxiety in Taylor. In part this was the result of the failure of the newspaper. Social changes surrounding urbanization and immigration raised questions over whether American society would continue to provide the chance to "get ahead," the essence of what was seen as American liberty. Much of the middle class shared this concern. It expressed itself as a growing fear over both the accumulation of power into the hands of a few and the arrival of new immigrants. In the eyes of some, each threatened personal liberty. Public discourse over the accumulation of power and immigration played on the dark imagery of the foreign Other. The mythology of movement and space—expressed visibly in the craze for panoramic painting with which Taylor had links—offered a means for the preservation of liberty. Sent by the Tribune to cover the California Gold Rush, in

his letters and subsequent book Eldorado, Taylor painted the west as a paradise of individual opportunity.

The growth of American power during the mid-nineteenth century was thrilling for Americans who closely associated their own fate with that of the nation. But it was also analogous to the danger that the accumulation of power held in their own lives. Some felt uneasy about the expanding excesses of wealthy Americans, and the deviant opportunities money could bring. These fears found expression in concern over the growing power of the nation. It might, some thought, generate corruption as well as decline. In chapter five I discuss how one place that Taylor and others focused their anxiety was on the idea of “empire.” Underlying what Taylor called travels “on the way to empire” lay the correspondence in bourgeois society between universal values and American nationalism. Taylor’s two year journey around the world in the early 1850s captured these concerns. During his travels to California, Mexico, Africa, Asia and the Middle East, Taylor embodied the growing political, commercial, and even military reach of the United States at mid-century. His accounts of the trip contributed to an emerging argument about the distinctiveness of American Empire. Contrasting American and British Empire Taylor helped elaborate notions of national exceptionalism. The nation’s distinctiveness promised to preserve it from the moral and historical taint of empire, despite its continued drive for power. American empire was equated with universal and timeless principles and processes, cosmopolitan values that were ironically proclaimed as a distinctive feature of American bourgeois identity.

Chapter six explores the erotic and violent associations Taylor linked with travel and the foreign. It tells the larger story of how the bourgeois experience of sensual desire

were created in a transnational context and linked to consumption, fantasy, and fulfillment. Americans of the mid-nineteenth century had to contend with demands that seemed contradictory to the values of self-discipline. From his early youth Taylor was tempted by a growing number of illicit impulses. He found release from them in the sensational literature and theatrical performances of the day. Stock-in-trade of both was the use of exotic imagery. First, I make what is today a fairly conventional argument that to cope with their desires, Americans like Taylor projected onto the foreign the evil or immoral impulses they felt themselves. Beyond this, however, I also suggest that the experience of desire was itself produced, at least in part, through an intersection of exoticism and consumer culture. Taylor was both a producer and consumer of these desires. He incorporated the erotic and violent possibilities of the Other in his travel writing, and these themes became a critical feature of his success.

Chapter seven focuses on a small section of the American intelligentsia and how they helped craft a link between truth and authenticity that later became common throughout bourgeois society. The chapter examines how writers like Melville, Hawthorne, and Poe, associated with the American Renaissance, used the metaphors of travel and encounter with the foreign to express the capacity for human depravity and hypocritical self-delusion. It traces this tendency to personal dilemmas in the authors' lives as they confronted the new realities of the market society while still holding to values antithetical to it. As early as the late 1840s Taylor experienced a growing conflict between his sense of himself as an artist and the pressures he felt as a professional writer. The tension bred feelings of insincerity or falseness. Throughout the remainder of his life Taylor appeared alternatively perplexed and angry over his belief that fame and fortune

had come at the cost his artistic soul. In response he began, like other authors, to prize a more rugged sense of the romantic inner-self: one distinguished by its purported authenticity. Foreign travel became seen by some as a means to cut through the delusions surrounding life and re-discover one's primal qualities in the contact with "less civilized" or "primitive" peoples. In essence, the pursuit of the authentic was the existential corollary to his aesthetic romanticism and sensual exoticism. I speculate that the dilemmas these authors felt and their fascination with the question of authenticity was experienced to some degree by elements of the emerging bourgeois society. I then suggest that Taylor's evasive response to the conflict embodied a fundamental compromise between genteel ideals and practical necessity that pleased audiences and thus partly explains the huge popularity he enjoyed.

In chapter eight I explore the enormous fame Taylor achieved during the 1850s through what I argue is a correlation in bourgeois thought between desire, vitality and success. Upon his return from the round-the-world journey he discovered he had become a national celebrity. When he arrived in towns, fans greeted him with enthusiasm that at times bordered on mania. Here I argue that elevating Taylor to the status of a celebrity served a purpose for many of his fans, allowing them to see him as a new ideal of bourgeois masculinity. Critical to this belief was the assumption that Taylor's fame was itself an indication that the incorporation rather than rejection of desire would lead to success. Many believed that Taylor's mesmeric hold over audiences was an example of the power that lay in the embrace of one's primal impulses. Thus, in the eyes of some, the power of Taylor's personality stemmed fundamentally from his association with the elemental nature of the foreign. That belief was made possible by the way Taylor

actively blurred the lines between himself and the exotic peoples that he visited.

Audiences, wishing to indulge desires they associated with the Other, eagerly imbued him with what they secretly longed for themselves, thus making their celebration of him a means of both gratifying their impulses and legitimating gratification as a practical, even moral, means of achieving success. That conclusion eased a paradox between the lingering imperatives of control and the blandishments of a culture increasingly given over to romantic aspiration and consumer self-fulfillment.

Together the various narratives of travel and encounter described above were part of what might be described as a transnational imaginary intertwined with oriental, primitive, national, and imperial discourses. The terrain of this imaginary comprised a geography of bourgeois desires. These desires sprang from private and public needs of adapting to the changing realities of life in the nineteenth century and forging a new social order dominated by bourgeois interests.

---

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Foster Rhea Dulles, Two Centuries of American Travel (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964), 30.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. John Overton Choules, D. D., The Cruise of the Steam Yacht North Star (London: James Blackwood, 1854), vi.

<sup>3</sup> The examples of letters written for newspapers are too numerous to count. In addition to those mentioned below see for example: Jane Eames to the Concord, New Hampshire Daily Monitor (1847, 1855, 1860, 1875), Curtis Guild to the Boston Commercial Bulletin (1867), P. L. Groome to local papers in North Carolina (1889).

<sup>4</sup> Sprague's letters were later published in two volumes: Letters from Europe, in 1828 (New York: Leavitt, 1828) and Visits to European Celebrities (Boston: Gould & Lincoln, 1855).

<sup>5</sup> Henry Maney, Memories over the Water, or, Stray Thoughts on the Long Stroll (Nashville, Tenn.: Toon, Nelson & Co., 1854).

<sup>6</sup> Anne Tuttle Jones Bullard, Sights and Scenes in Europe: a Series of Letters from England, France, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy in 1850 (St. Louis: Chambers & Knapp, 1852).

<sup>7</sup> Samuel Wheelock Fiske, Mr. Dunn Brown's Experiences in Foreign Parts (Boston: Jewett, 1857).

<sup>8</sup> Benjamin Moran, The Footpath and Highway; or, Wanderings of an American in Great Britain in 1851 and 1852 (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1853), 1.

<sup>9</sup> Horace Greeley, Recollections of a Busy Life (New York: J. P. Ford and Company, 1868), 326.

<sup>10</sup> Loring Converse, Notes on What I Saw & How I Saw it: a tour around the world (Bucyrus, Ohio: Forum Steam Printing House, 1882); Noble Lovely Prentiss, A Kansan Abroad (Topeka: Martin, 1878).

<sup>11</sup> Moses F. Sweetser, Europe on \$2 Dollars a Day: A Few Notes for the Assistance of Tourists of Moderate Means, with Some Personal Reminiscences of Travel (Boston: Osgood, 1875), 107.

<sup>12</sup> James Riley, An Authentic Narrative of the Loss of the American Brig commerce, wrecked on the western coast of Africa, in the month of August, 1815 (New York: Mercein, 1817). Riley book was preceded by Matthew Carey's widely popular 1794, A Short Account of Algiers and Its Several Wars 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: Parker, 1794). Also see Judah Paddock, A Narrative of the Shipwreck of the Ship Oswego on the Coast of South Barbary (New York: Collins & Seymour, 1818). John Martin Baker, A View of the Commerce of the United States and the Mediterranean Sea-Ports, including the Adriatic and Morea; with Maps of the Principle Harbors in those Seas (Philadelphia: Barrington & Murphy, 1847).

<sup>13</sup> George Jones, a chaplain aboard the U.S.S. frigate "Delaware," published an account intent on "discriminating between the truth and error in regard to the sacred places of the Holy City." George Jones, Excursions to Cairo, Jerusalem, Damascus, and Balbec from the United States Ship Delaware, during Her Recent Cruise: With an Attempt to Discriminate between Truth and Error in Regard to the Sacred Places of the Holy Land (New York: Van Nostrand & Dwight, 1836). For examples of how this publication on the subject was not monopolized by elites on the eastern seaboard see also John D. Paxton, Letters on Palestine and Egypt (Lexington, Ky.: A. T. Skilman, 1839).

<sup>14</sup> In 1841 Biblical scholar Edward Robinson made his reputation attempting to shed more light on the matter. Edward Robinson, Biblical Researches in Palestine (1841). Other examples see Francis Lister Hawks, The Monuments of Egypt; or, Egypt a Witness for the Bible (New York: Putnam 1850). William McClure Thomson, The Land and the Book; or, Biblical Illustrations Drawn from the Manners and Customs, the Scenes and Scenery of the Holy Land, 2 vols. (New York: Harper, 1859). On the popular sales on The Land and the Book see Dictionary of American Biography.

<sup>15</sup> Timothy Dwight, "America: Or a Poem on the Settlement of the British Colonies," in The Major Poems of Timothy Dwight (1752-1917); reprint, Gainesville, Florida: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1969), 11-12.

<sup>16</sup> On the China trade see Amasa Delano, A Narrative of Voyagers and Travels in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres (Boston: House, 1817). By the second quarter of the nineteenth century the arrival of Chinese immigrants and the increase in missionary activity in Asia kept the region alive in the public imagination. This was particularly true after Japan and then China became, as Dwight anticipated it would, the focus of the nation's first steps towards transoceanic empire in 1853 with Commodore Perry's expedition. For an example of a missionary account see John Welsh Dulles, Life in India; or, Madras, the Neilgherries, and Calcutta (New York: American Sunday-School Union, 1855).

<sup>17</sup> John Ledyard, A Journal of Captain's Cook's Last Voyage to the Pacific Ocean (Hartford: Nathaniel Patten, 1783). David Porter, Journal of a Cruise made to the Pacific Ocean, by Captain David Porter, in the United States frigate Essex, in the years 1812, 1813, 1814. Containing Descriptions of the Cape de Verd Islands, Coasts of Brazil, Pangonia, Chili, and Peru, and of Gallapagos Islands, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Bradford & Inskip 1815). Many latter editions were published. Porter later added to his fame with Constantinople and Its Environs published in 1835.

<sup>18</sup> By the 1830s the public was entranced with stories of the white beaches, scantily clad peoples, and marooned sailors. See [William Samuel Waithman Ruschenberger] Three Years in the Pacific (1834). Horace Holden, Narrative of the Shipwreck, Captivity, and Sufferings of Horace Holden (Boston: Russell, Shattuck, 1836). See James Oliver Wreck of the Glide; with an account of the Life and Manners at the Fiji Islands (Boston: Ticknor, 1846). Also see Samuel Patterson's Narrative of the Adventures and Sufferings of Samuel Pattereson (1817). Some were written by whaling captains, others by missionaries, but the most famous came from the pen of Herman Melville. For a story by whalers see Edmund Fanning, Voyagers Round the World; with selected Sketches of Voyages to the South Seas, North and South Pacific Oceans, China, etc. (New York: Collins & Hanney, 1833).

<sup>19</sup> On there importance in see A. J. O'Shaughnessy, An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean (Philadelphia, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> Isaac Foster Coffin, Journal of a Residence in Chili. By a Young American Detained in the Country during the Revolutionary Scenes of 1817-18-19 (Boston: Wells & Lilly, 1823).

<sup>21</sup> Henry Ker, Travels Through the Western Interior of the United States, from the year 1808 up to the year 1816. With a particular description of a great part of Mexico, or New Spain (Elizabethtown, N.J.: private printing, 1816). Others, like Ephraim George Squier, exploited the rich vein opened by Stephens. At the same time a host of others generated interest in the region. Travelers touting the mineral and commercial possibilities with South America caught the curiosity of Northern investors. For an example of books written by businessmen see Thomas Ewbank, Life in Bazil; or, a Journal of a Visit to the Land of the Cocoa

and *Palm* (New York: Harper, 1856). One of the many travel accounts that came from government expeditions is William Henry Herndon's, *Exploration of the Valley of the Amazon* (Washington: Robert Armstrong, 1853-54). Veterans of the Mexican-American war and California Gold Rush produced a flood of personal accounts. The library of travel accounts of Mexico written by soldiers is large. For examples see: Benjamin Franklin Scribner *Camp Life of a Volunteer* (1847) and *A Campaign in Mexico* (1850); or George C. Furber, *Camp Stories* (1849) and *The Twelve Months Volunteer* (1848). Similarly the literature of the California Gold Rush is vast. And after the Civil War Americans were drawn to the recuperative advantages of the region's warm weather by works like George Washington Carleton's humorous sketches of Cuba and Peru. George Washington Carleton, *Our Artist in Cuba: Fifty Drawing on Wood. Leaves from the Sketch-Book of a Traveler, during the Winter of 1864-5* (New York: Carleton, 1865). This was the first book of three in his "Our Artist" series.

<sup>22</sup> Andrew Hull Foote, *Africa and the American Flag* (New York: Appleton, 1854).

<sup>23</sup> For examples written by missionaries see Daniel Kumler Flickinger, *Ethiopia* (1877). During the 1860s in a prelude to the scramble for Africa, a series of adventurers like Paul Belloni DuChaillu fixated public attention on the region. DuChaillu's 1861 account of his venture in the jungles of western Africa launched a career during which he gathered millions of faithful readers. Paul Belloni DuChaillu, *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa* (New York: Harper, 1861).

<sup>24</sup> H. T. Tuckerman, "Americans Abroad," *Putnam's Magazine*, n.s. 1 (1868): 530-38, 530-31.

<sup>25</sup> Philip Hone, *The Diary of Philip Hone, 1828-1851*, ed. Allan Nevins, 2 vols. (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1923), 905.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Dulles, *Two Centuries*, 1.

<sup>27</sup> Margaret Sweat, *Highways of Travel; or, A Summer in Europe* (Boston: Walker, Wise and Company, 1859), 1.

<sup>28</sup> Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, 23 vols (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1962-1987), 11:315.

<sup>29</sup> Hone, *Diary*, 1:274.

<sup>30</sup> For a discussion of this see Immanuel Wallerstein, *Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European Global Economy, 1600-1750* (New York, 1980).

<sup>31</sup> See periodization put forward by several scholars in A. G. Hopkins (ed.) *Globalization in World History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002).

<sup>32</sup> For a detailed analysis of these developments see Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and History: The Evolution of a Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999).

<sup>33</sup> On the issue of price convergence see Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and History: The Evolution of the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Economy* (London: MIT Press, 1999).

<sup>34</sup> Lincoln, "Lecture on Discoveries," in *The Portable Abraham Lincoln*, ed. by Andrew Delbanco (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1990). pp. 142-143.

<sup>35</sup> For a discussion on this see Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963).

<sup>36</sup> From Otto zu Stolberg-Wernigerode, *Germany and the United States during the Era of Bismarck* (Reading, Pennsylvania, 1937), 137. Quoted in LaFeber, *The New Empire*, 19.

<sup>37</sup> C. A. Bayly, "Archaic and Modern Globalization in the Eurasian and African Arena, 1750-1850," in A. G. Hopkins, ed. *Globalization in World History* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2002.), 54.

<sup>38</sup> See Sidney Mintz's classic study, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York, 1985).

<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of bourgeois society and the debate on terminology, see Jurgen Kocka, "The Middle Classes in Europe," *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 67, no. 4 (Dec. 1995), 783-806.

<sup>40</sup> Among the notably examples of this literature see Robert Weisbuch, *Atlantic Double-Cross: American Literature and British Influence in the Age of Emerson* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

<sup>41</sup> Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). Bruce Kuklick, *Puritans in Babylon: The Ancient Near East and American Intellectual Life, 1880-1930* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).

Although both of these works focus on either the late periods in U.S. history they note the importance of these early intellectual links.

<sup>42</sup> Daniel Rodger, Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998). Again while Rodgers focus is on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries he notes the links predate the period.

<sup>43</sup> On ideas of class in the early years of the nation see Martin J. Burke, The Conundrum of Class: Public Discourse on the Social Order in America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). For a more general discussion of class in American history see Burton J. Bledstein and Robert D. Johnston (eds.), The Middling Sorts: Explorations in the History of the American Middle Class (New York: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>44</sup> For an examination on the debate surrounding the idea of class and class differences in the United States see Stuart M. Blumin, "They Hypothesis of Middle-Class Formation in Nineteenth-Century America: A Critique of Some Proposals," The American Historical Review, vol. 90, no. 2 (April, 1985): 299-338.

<sup>45</sup> My view of the middle class draws substantially upon Stuart M. Blumin, The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Following Blumin I see middle class status existing in large part in the context of shifting labor relations and social interactions during the antebellum period. In this process people became aware of their difference. They evolved a "middle class awareness," as Anthony Giddens has termed it. Unlike Blumin, however, I see the signs of a quest for middle class cultural identity, and hence an awareness of themselves as a group, appearing during the antebellum period. The rising importance of competition, specialized knowledge, and one's mode of work coincides with the dramatic transformation of American life due to the expansion of the market economy. A market society is one in which social interaction becomes dominated by exchange. Within such a society, human products, labor, ideas, and even feelings become, like nature itself, extensively commodified. In its crudest expression, they are reduced to cash—the universal unit of value within the market—and governed by the dynamics of exchange on a large scale.

<sup>46</sup> The discussion of the term middle class is extensive. For an overview see Burton J. Bledstein and Robert D. Johnston (eds.), The Middling Sorts: Explorations I the History of the American Middle Class (New York: Routledge, 2001), especially the introduction. For an overview of this literature on the nineteenth century see Maris A. Vinovskis, "Stalking the Elusive Middle Class in Nineteenth-Century America. A Review Article," Comparative Studies in Society and History 33 (July 1991): 582-587. On the difficulties in coming to a useful definition of the concept see Martin Burke, The Conundrum of Class: Public Discourse on the Social Order in America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). Though my definition follows the distinction made by C. Wright Mills in his White Collar: The American Middle Class (New York, 1951) I am qualifying this taxonomy substantially. See comments below for further elaboration of how I am using the term.

<sup>47</sup> Samuel Irenaeus Prime, Travels in Europe and the East: a year in England, Scotland, Ireland ... (New York: Harper, 1855), 13.

<sup>48</sup> Henry Maney, Memories over the Water, or, Stray Thoughts on a Long Stroll (Nashville, TN: Toon, Nelson & Co., 1854).

<sup>49</sup> Marie Mitchell, Life, Letters, and Journals (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 47.

<sup>50</sup> Haeseler's letters were later compiled into a book Across the Atlantic. Letters from France, Germany, Italy, and England (Philadelphia: Peterson, 1868).

<sup>51</sup> On this subject see Erick J. Leed, The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

<sup>52</sup> For an example of the cosmopolitan influence at the root of bourgeois intellectual history, see Karen O'Brien, Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

<sup>53</sup> On the heterogeneity of the middle class see Melanie Archer and Judith R. Blau, "Class Formation in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of the Middle Class," Annual Review of Sociology 19 (1993).

<sup>54</sup> See O'Brien, Narratives of Enlightenment.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Amasa Delano, A Narrative of Voyagers and Travels in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres (Boston: House, 1817).

<sup>57</sup> On the role of travelers and knowledge production in the expansion of empire see C. A. Bayly, Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996). Also see Richard Drayton, Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain and the "Improvement" of the World (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

---

<sup>58</sup> The literature that explains the use of comparative racial, ethnographic and national language is extensive. One example is O. P. Kejariwal, The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India's Past, 1748-1838 (Delhi, 1988). Also see Flora Kaplan, ed., Museums and the Making of "Ourselves": the Role of Objects in National Identity (London, 1994).

<sup>59</sup> The official and private literature produced in these various expeditions is voluminous and will be referenced on several occasions in the coming pages. For an example, however, see William Francis Lynch book Narrative of the States Expedition to the River Jordan and the Dead Sea (New York: Lee & Branch, 1849).

<sup>60</sup> Since the early years of the republic audiences had acquired a familiarity with the theme of progress, and of America's special place in the process. Speakers on solemn occasions invariably dusted off the sacred creed. Lincoln's lecture was in many respects a restatement of these ideas of progress sprinkled with biblical analogies and light doses of Fourth of July rhetoric.

<sup>61</sup> Nathaniel Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables (New York: Penguin, 1972), preface.

<sup>62</sup> Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter and Selected Tales (New York, Penguin, 1970), 36.

<sup>63</sup> Taylor has had four biographies written about him. The last appeared 70 years ago. In order of publication: Russell H. Conwell, The Life, Travels, and Literary Career of Bayard Taylor (Boston: B. B. Russell, 1879). Marie Hansen-Taylor and Horace E. Scudder, eds. Life and Letters of Bayard Taylor, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1884), Albert H. Smyth, Bayard Taylor (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1896), and Richmond Croom Beatty, Bayard Taylor: Laureate of the Gilded Age (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1936).

<sup>64</sup> There are a number of areas that remain outside the scope of the study. It does not attempt to offer a comprehensive rendering of such a complex and vast subject as the attitudes of middle-class Americans towards other peoples. Nor is it argued that all those who fall within my definition of the middle class were deeply interested in travel and foreign lands. Nevertheless, even decisions to read a book of travel or even buy a Japanese fan can be seen as consequential. What also will become evident is that this romance with travel and the foreign was neither consistent nor rational, but cut to fit the purposes of the user.

<sup>65</sup> See Richard L. Bushman, The Refinement of American: Persons, Houses, Cities (New York: Vintage, 1992).

<sup>66</sup> On the topic of symbolic and cultural capital see French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984).

## Chapter 1

### **The Journey of Success: Travel as Discipline and Enlightened Self-Improvement**

Looking back upon his youth Taylor remembered “as distinctly as if it [was] yesterday” the first time he gratified his passion to see the world that lay beyond the family farm.

Looking out of the garret window, on a bright May morning, I discovered a row of slats which had been nailed over the shingles for the convenience of the carpenters, in roofing the house, and had not been removed. Here was, at last, a chance to reach the comb of the steep roof, and take my first look abroad into the world! Not without some trepidation I ventured out, and was soon seated astride of the sharp ridge. Unknown forests, new fields and houses appeared to my triumphant view. The prospect, though it did not extend for more than four miles in any direction, was boundless.<sup>1</sup>

He could not have been much more than ten. The year was perhaps 1838. A child’s curiosity might be enough to explain the ascent of those rickety slats. Yet Taylor thought the incident demonstrated a unique trait of his character. Whatever the cause, he lived in a time that charged distant places with fantastic possibilities that drew people to want to see them. As Taylor remembered it, the “world” that stretched before him that day seemed pregnant with possibility. And his wonder appears tinged with a sense of portent. The occasion of his eventual journey into the forest and mountains beyond held the “prospect” of a boundless future.<sup>2</sup>

From where did that fantasy come? Far from an unchanging pastoral life first suggested by the image of the family farm, the landscape he surveyed that day was in the midst of broad transformation. The transportation, market and print-culture revolutions increasingly linked people like Taylor to the larger world. The opportunities and demands this development brought encouraged many to look out beyond the horizon and toward the future (see appendix A for photograph of Taylor’s boyhood home).

When they looked outward, and dreamed of the future, it was often with a sense of trepidation as well as hope. This stimulated an impulse within the puritan spiritual heritage of the nation to seek to contain misfortune through moral discipline, a tradition that likened the development of character to the travails of a journey. Coupling with this idea of spiritual quest for perfection was the Enlightenment inspired belief that the knowledge gained from observation during travel produced progress.

If one aspires to success in life, Taylor later told audiences listening to his lecture “The Philosophy of Travel,” then they should follow the words of an Arab poet.

Leave home, and journey, if thou strivest for great deeds. Five advantages though wilt at least procure by traveling. Thou wilt have pleasure and profit; thou wilt enlarge thy prospects; cultivate thyself; and acquire friends.<sup>3</sup>

There are those, he admitted, who would nonetheless dismiss the observation as an immoral, foreign temptation and counter it with the suggestion that “a rolling stone gathers no moss.” In response he suggested a saying that was probably familiar to him when he climbed to the top of the farm, “a setting hen never gets fat.” He had lived his own life by those words. By the time he advised others to follow them his success must have been a compelling endorsement.<sup>4</sup>

### **Horizons of Hope**

Little more than a mile from Taylor’s home as a boy lay the village of Kennett Square. Small as it was Kennett linked the Taylor family to an outside world. Growing-up in the countryside of Pennsylvania Taylor was connected to the larger world by the commercial and transportation revolutions that had begun at the end of the eighteenth century. The crops Taylor’s father grew passed through Kennett Square on their way to Philadelphia along a turnpike completed in 1794. Over the years the area had become a

major producer of agricultural staples for the nearby city. Farmers had turned from subsistence to cash crops needed by the cities, such as barley for Philadelphia's many brewers. Through that connection they became linked to, and increasingly dependent upon, a growing national and trans-Atlantic economy. Devoted to cash crops, farmers like Taylor increasingly turned to others for the goods they needed themselves.

Northwest of Kennett Square, mills appeared that made parts for spinning wheels, forged nails, chair rounds, and buttonmolds to supply such needs. Others mills carried on weaving and papermaking. In Kennett Square, craftsman like William Ecoff cobbled shoes, Mifflin Pyle made hats, and James White constructed coaches to sell in Philadelphia.<sup>5</sup>

A little beyond the hills Taylor could see from his roof were the rapidly growing towns of West Chester and Phoenixville. Around them small-scale manufacturing was even more evident. The nation's first rolling mill for iron sheet had been built nearby as early as 1793. The ironworks in Phoenixville were "equal to, if not, superior, to any rolling mill in this country." Some of first boilerplates made in the country came from these works. Manufacturing railroad iron, the region's industrial forges expanded throughout much of the 1830s and 1840s. By 1846 the Phoenix Iron Company alone employed 1,500 men. Within a few years nearly 40 other firms employed more than fifteen people each. Surrounding the iron, paper, textile, and gristmills were small family-sized businesses. All these businesses depended upon the links with the nearby city and beyond that to overseas markets. In 1830 potential stockholders of a railroad to connect the town to Philadelphia were told of its necessity to avoid falling "behind in the great race for progress now going on." Within a year a railroad pulled by horses began

operation. In 1845 steam replaced the animals. West Chester's leading bank, reflecting growing prosperity, spent \$30,000 in 1835 on an imposing neo-classical building.<sup>6</sup>

The changes were speeding the movement of both goods and people. The market brought with it possibilities unavailable within a subsistence economy. Individuals became consumers with access to goods previously beyond their reach. Providing those goods brought lucrative opportunity and the possibility of self-advancement. Many sought to take advantage of it by moving from one location to another, and into differing occupations in the hope of achieving personal fortune. Others simply moved by necessity in search of the jobs produced by the market.<sup>7</sup>

Young men migrated from local farms and regional villages to take advantage of the burgeoning employment opportunities in urban centers. For farmers and their children, urban centers held out opportunity that was disappearing in the countryside due to demographic and economic pressures. In town young men could acquire a trade. Years later Taylor wrote an autobiographical novel John Godfrey's Fortune that offers illuminating insights into his boyhood. One character, Bob Simmons, personified the sense of hope harbored by those who migrated. He was resigned to becoming a brewster or bricklayer because, he explained to his friend Godfrey, his "Dad's had a hard time [on] [...] only sixty acres [...] and a morgidge [sic] on it." "The farm, you know, isn't big enough for him and me." Bob's path through apprenticeship in town inevitably led him towards the city and grander ambitions. "Why do journey-work" when one can "get a dollar and a half a day in Philadelphy."

P'raps I may be boss, and do business on the wholesale. Bosses make money hand-over-fist. I tell you what, John I'd like to build a house for myself like [local gentry]—heavy stone, two foot thick, and just such big willy-trees before it—a hundred acres o'land, and prime stock on't; wouldn't I king it, then!<sup>8</sup>

If we multiply this story many times over we see why, as one contemporary put it in 1836, “The whole continent presents a scene of scrambling and roars with greedy hurry.”<sup>9</sup>

In Taylor’s recollections of these early years there are signs that for him the notion of geographic movement was inextricably linked to vertical social mobility. His earliest impulse were not to travel but a “desire to climb upward—so that without shifting the circle of my horizon, I could yet extend it, and take in a far wider sweep of vision.” “I envied every bird,” he went on to say, “that sat swinging upon the topmost bough of the great, century-old cherry tree.”<sup>10</sup> People around him were indeed moving in search of opportunity. A spirit of liberal economic ambition gripped the nation. In Chester County, Taylor later explained, the pursuit of material gain and social improvement convinced many to look east to the big cities or west to the opening frontier. Moving outward was a means of moving upwards. The history of his family seemed to confirm this simple equation. The Taylors owed what they had in life to the decision to follow William Pitt across the Atlantic. His father’s land was a remnant, or so the story went, of the original bequest given them by Pitt himself.<sup>11</sup> But it was a connection continually reinforced in Taylor by the likes of his old Swiss nurse who regaled him with stories of the old world and presumably the virtues of having come to this one so that she could serve him.<sup>12</sup> The stream of new immigrants arriving in nearby West Chester, or the migrants who passed through Kennett Square on their way west, suggested much the same story. It was illustrated to him again through the success of regional merchants, craftsman, and farmers who reaped rewards through their connection to distant markets.

Very real material opportunity underwrote the myth that success lay beyond the seas. In nearby Philadelphia by 1836 the 300 block of Walnut Street was one of the most prosperous in all of America, and it owed this position largely to foreign exchange. “Walnut Street,” one historian has explained, “boasted more than opulence: there was an Oriental flavor to that opulence.” After the decline of the slave trade, commerce with China became one of the most lucrative markets, and Philadelphia controlled nearly half of that. The stories were legend. The penniless immigrant Stephen Girard became wealthy through the Calcutta and China trade.<sup>13</sup> Around Boston as well, trade with the “teeming millions” in Asia fostered visions of Beacon Street mansions.<sup>14</sup> Years before Thoreau lived his hermit life near the pond of Walden it was common for the ice to be cut, packed in sawdust, and carried by fast clipper ship to the hot, thirsty land of India.<sup>15</sup> Colonial English paid handsomely for something to cool their drinks. Several New Yorkers were made millionaires by the trade. One contemporary explained: “To have an office on India wharf, Boston or to live in the India Rox that comprised the fine old square built houses of many a seaport town, conferred distinction.” On Cape Cod “it used to be said of a pretty well-bred girl, ‘She’s good enough to marry an East India Cap’n.’” In short, East Indian merchants of ante-bellum Boston, Salem, and other seaport towns “possessed social kudos to which no cotton millionaire could pretend.” The fortunes these merchants made spread the image of a world filled with riches.<sup>16</sup>

The mythology of opportunity that evolved out of these realities extended far beyond the nation’s wealthy. “Among the sailors the man who had made an East India voyage booked no backwind from any one” a sailor noted. The treasures brought back by these voyages played an important role in the lives of many people.<sup>17</sup> A diarist familiar

with the trade remembered the ships bringing “boxes of tea and silks, lacquers and porcelain and curious objects from the Polynesian islands,” and these objects found their way into the most modest homes. As much as 10-20% of the effects in early nineteenth century Boston, Salem, and Philadelphia households came from China.<sup>18</sup> The dreams they spawned of wealth and wonder easily reached towns like Kennett Square.<sup>19</sup> It was no wonder then that at the age of six Taylor’s mother found him studying a map and constructing imaginary journeys.<sup>20</sup>

Like others Taylor learned of it all not only from stories of those who passed through Kennett but also by reading. The printed word provided another window on to the world. Taught by his mother to read at the age of four, he took refuge from his obligations and confinement in the books he borrowed from the small lending library in Kennett Square—an institution that his mother had helped create. At home his mother aided his escapes. Whenever possible she contrived tasks within the home keeping him away from the field and affording time to read. The first book he could recall appropriately was titled Wonders of the World.<sup>21</sup>

American readers of the first half of the nineteenth-century came into contact with news about foreign lands through newspapers and magazines. In 1826 the first steam-powered press appeared in the United States spreading the ubiquity of the printed word. Soon the imported Napier cylinder press followed it, a device that increased production ten-fold for newspapers. Between 1810 and 1835 the number of papers printed in the country leapt from 375 to 1,200, and the number doubled again within fifteen years. As the historian Charles Sellers explains, “By 1840 the United States had more newspapers

than any other country and almost twice the number of slightly less populous Great Britain.”<sup>22</sup>

His proximity to Philadelphia meant Taylor enjoyed a steady supply of newspapers and magazines. Out of Philadelphia, a center of early publishing, copies of Every Body’s Album, Graham’s Magazine, and Godey’s Lady’s Book made their way into Taylor’s hands. In them he read about places far different from Kennett Square. The tales of merchants and sailors comprised a healthy portion of travel lore. Peter Parley’s Magazine, published by Samuel G. Goodrich, often included exciting accounts of far away lands with large prints of wonders like the Pyramids of Egypt.<sup>23</sup>

The spread of formal education facilitated the growth of print-culture. The student readers, histories, and geographies used by schools opened the mysteries of the world to many young Americans. Taylor’s educational experience was typical. McGuffey Readers at the log schoolhouse in Kennett Square where Taylor began his education, and then again at the nearby Unionville Academy in 1842 where he completed it, informed him about the rest of the world and all it had to offer. “The science and art, laws, literature, and manners” Europe has given us, the McGuffey Reader quoted Daniel Webster as saying, are the source of our greatest debt to the Old World.<sup>24</sup> In the homes of middle-class Americans, thanks to new technologies and subscription sales techniques, one could find popular geographies and encyclopedias with increasing regularity. Taylor described these texts as having shaped his “dreams and aspirations.” As a boy he “wandered along the shores of the Mediterranean, while hoeing corn or tending cattle in my father’s field.” “The geography of Europe and the East was,” he explained, “at my tongue’s end.” The impressions were so indelibly etched that they came to mind when he

eventually encountered such wonders in person. At seeing the “curiously serrated mountains” of the Llobregat valley outside Barcelona, Taylor wrote:

That old book of The Wonders of the World (now, alas! driven from the library of childhood) opened its pages and showed its rough wood-cuts, in memory, to tell me what the mountain was. How many times has that wonderful book been the chief charm of my travels, causing me to forget Sulpicius on the Aegean Sea, Byron in Italy, and Humboldt in Mexico!<sup>25</sup>

From the library in Kennett Square, Taylor borrowed the works of Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper, two of the nation’s earliest fully professional authors. In them he found stories that invested travel with enormous meaning. Both writers were keenly aware of the intersection between space, movement, and success in their countrymen’s imagination. Writing in his journal some years before Taylor’s birth, Irving identified how conditions in the United States led almost inextricably to what he terms the “enchantment” of travel. The “impatience of restraint” and “restless spirit” of his countrymen, according to Irving,

may be traced to the unsettled mode of their life—the rapid changes that are continually taking place in the state of society and the face of the country around them—to the frequent shiftings of place and occupation—the vast migrations they undertake [...] [As a result the American] beholds every thing around him changing as if by enchantment—what was once a wilderness becoming a busy hive of population—what in childhood he saw a village grown into a city before he arrives at manhood—every where reality outstripping imagination—surely it is no wonder that such a one should be speculative and hyperbolical.<sup>26</sup>

Both Irving and Cooper tapped the dual directions of the American myth of space in their writing. Looking eastward, for them Old World was a place of wonder and possibility. From Sir Walter Scott’s romantic depictions of Scotland, Wordsworth’s and Dickens’ England, and Byron’s Italy and Greece, came an imaginative geography that Americans devoured. Irving, and following him Cooper, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, wrote about European civilization as awestruck outsiders. The opening of

The Sketchbook, the earliest and one of the most famed literary works that featured an American's visit to the Old World, described the author's feelings of wonder at the thought of distant land when he was a boy.

Books of voyages and travels became my passion, and in devouring their contents, I neglected the regular exercises of the school. How wistfully would I wander about the pier heads in fine weather, and watch the parting ships, bound to distant climes —with what longing eyes would I gaze after their lessening sails, and waft myself in imagination to the ends of the earth!<sup>27</sup>

To Irving, foreign lands seemed to hold almost mystical promise. Appropriately The Sketchbook gave substance to that belief. Irving had turned to the writing of the book at a moment of financial disaster. His hope was to save the family business from ruin. The gamble turned-out better than he ever could have hoped.<sup>28</sup> No wonder that in the coming years the stories Irving wrote spun images of cultural riches to be had in Europe that rivaled those told by the merchant and sailor who traded in porcelain, silk, and ice.

In the American imagination the counterpoint to Europe was the frontier. Upon the frontier, to summarize the basic convention, men had the opportunity to rise to social prominence. Indeed the idea of the frontier, of the journey into a hostile and unfamiliar world where one had the “chance” to determine destiny, gained its greatest resonance as it became a mythic analog to the market society back East. The market, like the frontier, had the alluring potential for reinventing the self.

In the 1820s Cooper began to popularize this myth of the frontier in his Leatherstocking series. Cooper's father had been a pioneer of frontier development, establishing Cooperstown in the 1780s. The elder Cooper had become in the process a wealthy man. The hero of his son's novels, Natty Bumppo (better known as Leatherstocking), embodied the raw democratic potential of the frontier setting.

Possessing limited education or cultivated virtues, much as his clumsy name suggested, he nonetheless thrived in the natural uncivilized forests.<sup>29</sup>

In sum Americans of this era possessed an imagination fringed by two mythic geographies of hope: the Frontier and the Old World. Both Cooper and Irving spent much of their careers writing alternatively about the Old World and the frontier. They were, in fact, the first successful American authors precisely because what they wrote had great relevance to the mixed mythologies that governed the imagination. Success in America was to occupy not only a vertical but also a horizontal space. Their writings incorporated and overlapped parts of both myths. Cooper in particular, while becoming an architect of the frontier myth itself, also tapped the tension and shared themes of the two imaginative landscapes. In fact, his oeuvre can be read as the first in a long line of literary efforts by Americans to wed the two.<sup>30</sup>

### **Disciplinary Journeys**

Even the most casual reader of Irving and Cooper detects a sense of anxiety over the vast changes sweeping through American life. The unfortunate Rip Van Winkle falls asleep one day only to awake and find that history has passed him by. All that Rip Van Winkle had once known and cared for had disappeared. Unable to take advantage of the changes that occurred while he slept he awakes irrelevant, the victim of a premature social death. Here and in his other writings Irving was giving voice to a sense of dislocation and insecurity fostered in part by the many changes in American life.<sup>31</sup>

Reading Cooper, Taylor encountered in the author's depictions of the frontier an anarchic zone where the rules of civilization came into conflict with the primitive freedom of nature. Social hierarchy, property rights, and tradition were compromised or non-

existent. The inspiration for Cooper's fears resulted in part from the political and social instability of the life he had experienced growing up Cooperstown, New York during the turn of the century. It was the town his father founded at what was then the western frontier. Nevertheless, his father's social rise had foundered partly due to the turbulent social conflicts over land and individual rights generated by this wide-open environment. Cooper had found himself embroiled in the legacy of the conflict between those who had attained economic security and those who still sought it.<sup>32</sup>

The stories of Irving and Cooper provided a literary sounding of concerns harbored by readers, even those as young as Taylor. While the changes taking place around him encouraged the young man to look outward with a sense of hope, they also excited a sense of trepidation. Summing up the emotions Taylor felt as a boy, "When I walked these [West Chester] streets [it was] with a mixture of hope and restlessness in regard to the future."<sup>33</sup> A sensitive boy, he could see that the changes bred uncertainty and worry in those older than him. The fortunes of his father made Taylor aware of the precarious nature of the life in the new market society. Joseph Taylor was not a successful man. One of first memories of the younger Taylor must have been the failure of his father's store in Kennett Square and retreat to the farm. In 1837, like the rest of the country, the family again faced economic troubles. Two years before crop failures had caused a spike in agricultural prices which stimulated inflation to rise to as high as 25 percent.<sup>34</sup>

In all likelihood Joseph Taylor in 1837 teetered on the edge of ruin. In long settled regions like Chester County, subdivisions of land left many farmers with plots of inadequate size, and others with little opportunity to acquire any land at all. High land

prices left many in debt. The dependence on cash crops necessitated in part by the need to pay debt, combined with the fickleness of the markets, left them vulnerable. Taylor was familiar with the plight, made clear in the story told in John Godfrey's Fortune of a character, Bob Simmons, whose father had trouble paying his "morgidge" on only sixty acres of land. When the foreign agricultural markets collapsed, as they did in 1819 and again in 1837, cash inside the United States became scarce. A contemporary, Philip Hone, wrote that following the panic there was "no money in circulation, and the farmer is compelled to 'dicker' his wheat for molasses and tea and sugar" rather than cash. With no money to pay mortgages farmers defaulted.<sup>35</sup> Drained of specie, banks began to fold. Businesses went bankrupt. In New York by the summer of 1837 newspaper editor Horace Greeley reported, "one fourth of all those connected with mercantile and manufacturing interests are out of business with dreary prospects for the winter."<sup>36</sup> As in the story told in John Godfrey's Fortune of Bob Simmons, one solution for the farmer was to move to the city in search of work. It was a story that mirrored events of Taylor's own life. In 1838 political connections helped Joseph Taylor become elected sheriff of West Chester. Guaranteed a steady income, the family moved.

If the circumstances of his family's move did not alert Taylor to the dangers accompanying the far reaching changes in the society, living in the "mini-city" of West Chester certainly did.<sup>37</sup> The growing town was the center of the local economy and bore the signs of both the benefits and problems of the "race for progress." Between 1820 and 1840 the population of West Chester quadrupled to around 5,000 inhabitants, the poorest of whom were packed into blocks on the southwest and west sides of town. Most worked in the numerous manufacturing businesses that had sprung up during these years.<sup>38</sup>

People like Joseph Taylor could see the changes that were undermining older republican ideals of individual autonomy and independence. Men like himself were being forced to leave their farms for precarious existence in cities. And there men appeared governed by different values. They pursued self-interest rather than consider the needs of the community. Or, at least, so it seemed to those like the elder Taylor. These were the sort of thoughts that reinforced the long standing republican distrust of cities, and indeed of the entire world beyond the United States. For farmers vulnerable to the capricious fluctuations of foreign markets, connection to the world was filled less with promise than danger. Such conclusions set them against worldliness and made them distrust those who seemed eager for it. Worldly strivers were the kindred spirits of preening aristocrats whose selfishness threatened the sound independence of the republican farmer. In time Taylor's father would come to believe there was too much of that in his son.

But these dim views of the opportunities held-out by the world were parried by signs that connection to the wider world was good. Handsome new brick homes showed that for some in the town the growth of commerce had produced significant rewards. The owners were members of the nation's emerging new middle class. As elsewhere in the country, business owners, merchants, bankers, contractors, professionals, clerk and managers formed a loose new social group that was situated to enjoy the greatest dividends, the greatest opportunities, which the society had to offer.

The paths to middle-class economic status were diverse. Taylor's depiction of Bob Simmons' ambition to become a boss and wholesaler was one such path. As commercial opportunities expanded during the early nineteenth-century some master

craftsmen turned to more efficient modes of production to meet demand. Removed from production by these changes, owners turned their attention to larger business concerns. Some left production altogether and became retailers of other's products.<sup>39</sup>

By degrees a spatial separation from shop and office followed, resulting in a heightening difference between manual and non-manual forms of labor. As owners removed themselves from actual production and oversaw business operations, they employed more clerks, salesman, managers, and retailers.<sup>40</sup> These educated employees earned salaries rather than wages. They could make considerably more than the average mechanic, artisan, or farmer.<sup>41</sup> As business expanded, the need for engineers, lawyers, and the educators to teach them also grew, swelling the ranks of this largely diverse, urban, segment of the population.

Taylor's parents eyed a non-manual labor job for their eldest boy. The small size of the farm, to which Joseph Taylor would eventually return, made it impossible for Bayard to join him. The boy was not inclined in that direction anyway; at an early age Bayard demonstrated "a constitutional horror of dirty hands."<sup>42</sup> The young man's love of reading and fanciful dreams were not a good sign. His distaste for farm work was worse. It offended Joseph Taylor's Quaker plainness and republican ideas of honest, useful labor. He feared the boy was shiftless. Taylor's mother later explained that despite her son's obvious "sensitive nerves" and "beautiful shaped hands"—not meant for work—"his father was unable to understand" the boy's disposition. "He called him," she recalled, "lazy and good-for-nothing."<sup>43</sup> Years later when young Bayard abandon the community for larger pastures the father moaned that his son "likes to ramble too much; he is not steady enough."<sup>44</sup> Fortunately his father was no fool and saw he had better

prepare him for something else. Soon after moving to West Chester, Bayard was enrolled in the local Bolmar's Academy where the next three years he studied alongside the children of the town's educated and prosperous citizens. His parents looked forward to the day when he might become an apprentice and eventual owner of a local business.

Fortunately the boy possessed an ambitious disposition: the desire, as he described it, to climb upward and remake himself into the master of all he surveyed. He shared this outlook with many of the new middle class of West Chester. Governed by republican values the older tradesman, mechanics and small artisan proprietors frequently seemed content to own and practice their trade. They believed that honest work, rather than growth, resulted in virtues of both individual and social stability. But a new spirit animated the dramatic growth underway. Many of those who were to become part of the new middle class shared an increasingly distinct set of expectations rooted in liberal, free-market values. For them social virtue became connected to self-transformation.<sup>45</sup> Those who would become the nation's middle class were ambitious not only to own a business but to grow it and amass a fortune. Their liberal values were more individualistic, and as we shall see in a moment it was believed by them that the pursuit of self-interest was a moral virtue.

Nevertheless this very ambition produced considerable pressure upon the individual. When coupled with the realities of a fluid market society, there was cause for anxiety. Poverty wove a dark streak through the potentiality of the democratic market economy. In his father the specter of failure hovered very close for Taylor. Around West Chester its consequence lay in full sight. The difference between rich and poor was often stark. Yet prosperity was itself no guarantee of continued comfort. Those who had

attained success were also threatened by misfortune. The market, as economic downturns like 1819 and 1837 showed, left everyone vulnerable.<sup>46</sup>

Fear inspired the middle class to work desperately hard to tame the market. To ease the very real dangers, they struggled to bring order to the chaos, and thus to maximize success and minimize failure. They sought, in short, to domesticate fortune. Indeed part of the middle-class sense of promise was to escape from the anxiety of want altogether. To attain such an elusive goal they sought self-mastery through the development of moral discipline. And that goal indirectly encouraged a greater fascination with the idea of travel.

From the moment he could read, Taylor, like many Americans of the day, became familiar with the Puritan allegory of spiritual journey. John Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress was one of the first books he ever read. He derived from it a vision of life as a highly individualistic, protracted journey towards an uncertain spiritual end. The wise reader, Bunyan warned, will see he is on a journey not much different than the story before him.

This book will make a traveler of thee,  
If by its counsel thou wilt ruled be;  
It will direct thee to the Holy Land,  
If thou wilt its directions understand:  
Yea, it will make the slothful active be;  
The blind also delightful things to see.<sup>47</sup>

The goal of the journey was the salvation of one's soul, the only thing that really mattered in life. It could not be earned but required strict discipline and a constant state of readiness for the sign of God's grace. These steps would protect the traveler against all the threats and temptations laying in wait along the path. The most immediate dangers encountered by men in travel according to Bunyan, and I will suggest in many examples

of later travel literature, were not of a natural kind—the possibility of drowning at sea—but of moral corruption. In the minds of many in the mid-nineteenth century that threat rose above all others as a cause for individual failure.

Taylor found the story updated and amplified in perhaps his favorite book of his younger years, Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe. It is the morality tale of a wayward youth, lost upon an uninhabited, prelapsarian island, saved by his insistence upon work. He transformed the island he lived on, planting crops, and building an elaborate fortified house against a largely imaginary enemy. The results are recorded in his journals not as proof of his growing material wealth but to serve as a reckoning of his spiritual state. Steadily through his discipline and labor the island becomes his, thus his material success is directly linked to his growing spiritual awareness and is a sign to him of God's grace.

To many this story of redemption was replicated in the history of America itself. The journey of the settlers to the New World as it was told by the histories Taylor read was simply another version of this Puritan narrative. Immigrating to America was literal embodiment of the spiritual voyage described by Bunyan. As with Robinson Crusoe the growing prosperity of the nation was a sign of providence. Readers of George Bancroft's histories would have encountered there a moral vision of travel they had largely internalized from Bunyan and Defoe.

The journals of Julia Dyson of New Hampshire offer an example of how these narratives shaped individual expectations. Born in 1818 the second daughter of a Westford, Massachusetts physician, Dyson grew into a woman who, friends said, possessed "far-reaching aspirations." She came to see her life in terms very much like the puritan moral allegory. In January of 1842 she wrote in her journal:

Another year has fled and another begun. How swift are the footsteps of time! How wise that his steps are counted, and parceled out into days and months and years; otherwise we should be insensible to its progress. [...] The close of such periods of time may be compared to eminences in the journey of human life, to which we may ascend, and view the path we have left behind us; contemplate the difficulties of the way, the temptations to which we have been exposed, the dangers from which we have escaped, the thousand windings that have attracted us from duty and happiness, and from such a view to gather up wisdom and instruction for the remainder of our pilgrimage.<sup>48</sup>

It was perhaps her sense of life as travail—from which the word travel is derived—that prompted the fascination with travel literature revealed in her journals. In any case it is unnecessary to belabor the point that this sense of spiritual journey was important to the consciousness of many Americans. The role of evangelical revivalism in Dyson's life, however, reveals another clue as to why the motif of travel had become so crucially important for many, including Taylor, at this moment in history.

West Chester County during the 1820s and 1830s experienced an upsurge in spiritualism that gave added significance to the allegory of spiritual journey. During the two decades after the War of 1812 the religious revival known as the Second Great Awakening grew in intensity and scope. Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist revivalists embraced a spiritual individualism that went beyond that sanctioned by the Puritans. In contrast to the older Calvinist doctrine of pre-destination, the revivalist ministers asserted that God made men moral free agents. Spiritual destiny lay in one's own hands, they argued. To be saved an individual needed first to seek a direct relationship with God. Further, in order to achieve salvation they needed to discover within them an "inner-light" or emotional rather than rational experience with God. The transformation occurred through a spiritual rebirth or conversion.<sup>49</sup>

Across the country the “awakening” emerged in commercial centers like the town of West Chester. The importance of free agency or spiritual self-determination paralleled the emerging belief in economic and political individualism. Salvation, like economic success, according to the liberal economic theory of the market, depended upon oneself. “Moderate Light” theology, as it is sometimes called, put more emphasis upon works. Moderate Lights believed behavior to be as important as belief. They translated these beliefs into codes for conduct as well as reconstituted institutions around such codes. The values and behaviors that produced both spiritual and socio-economic transformation were to them similar. Self-reliance, sobriety, self-discipline, delayed gratification, optimism, and, in short, industry, promised both forms of personal salvation.<sup>50</sup>

These views, however, certainly gave secular hope to ambitious men of humble beginning like Taylor. With the cultivation of these qualities, what was called “Character” at the time, individuals might raise themselves up. Men as distant from the market as Ralph Waldo Emerson accepted this moral and secular connection to social position. “Success and credit,” he said, “depend on enterprise [...] on honesty, and steadiness of mind.” So much so, he continued, that wealth, is a certification that one possessed a “great faculty, of virtue.” Moral quality, he concluded, gives “currency every day to notes of hand.”<sup>51</sup> It was this equation of self-discipline and personal transformation that bound Christian virtue with free market economic and social thought. The philosophical message was that in all aspects of life one’s final condition was the responsibility of the individual. The antinomian avenue towards salvation validated the pursuit of what we could term “spiritual self-interest.” The realization of one’s own salvation was linked to the world of material and social success. Middle-class

evangelical Americans were in essence fostering values compatible with the free market society.

Together the result was a transformation in the behavior of many Americans but most forcefully within the ranks of those determined to attain social success and who believed it could be had through self-discipline. The historian Paul E. Johnson has offered an example of the transformation in personal behavior:

In 1825 a northern businessman dominated his wife and children, worked irregular hours, consumed enormous amounts of alcohol, and seldom voted or went to church. Ten years later the same man went to church twice a week, treated his family with gentleness and love, drank nothing but water, worked steady hours and forced his employees to do the same, campaigned for the Whig Party, and spent his spare time convincing others that if they organized their lives in similar ways, the world would be perfect.<sup>52</sup>

Men like the ones Johnson described surrounded Taylor during his years in West Chester. They were the prominent men at the Meeting Houses of the Quakers, the Presbyterian steeples, and the local civic institutions. They embodied the connection between evangelical faith and social status and from them he accepted as second nature the ethos of self-discipline central to the individual morality of liberal Protestantism. From them he learned to take for granted a correlation between character and fortune.

They were also men who did not shy away from the uncertainties of the market. In some ways the rise of Protestant theology made the market a test of faith. If success was a result of one's moral purity then it was also a sign of God's grace. Use of the term "fortune" captured the importance of wealth as a measure of success. It also suggests two other qualities: enterprise, believed indispensable to prosperity; and chance, most often viewed in the mystical terms of divine intervention.<sup>53</sup> In reality, of course, fate was most often only the arbitrary result of the unfolding of the market. As I have suggested here,

part of the culture that came to define what it meant to be middle class in America evolved as a means to contain the chaotic or chance element of the market society. It was a culture that strove to forestall misfortune, maximize success, and legitimate the results with the seal of inevitability.<sup>54</sup> Protestant evangelicalism provided one such technique by transforming the work of this world into a sign of predetermination. In 1842, Taylor scrawled in his diary his own private hymn to this compelling belief:

I am laboring intently, and intend to do something, far more than the common frame; but whether I shall or not the Almighty alone knows; and he will do what is right. There is something more than chance in a man's passage through life, yes a design almost amounting to destiny.<sup>55</sup>

Indeed it seemed that to hide from the trials of this world was tantamount to not searching for moral perfection. If people ventured bravely into the world, maintained their moral discipline, God would make it all come out right.

Men like Calvin Fletcher of Indiana certainly believed this to be the case. Born in Vermont in 1800, Fletcher moved to the mid-west in 1817 and settled four years later in Indianapolis then not much more than a crude outpost on the edge of western expansion. The self-educated Fletcher began his life in Indiana as a lawyer. He speculated in land, eventually accumulating extensive properties, much of which he rented and in time became prominent in local banking and railroad construction. Fletcher was a stout Methodist who believed in discipline, self-denial but also in the practical value of knowledge. He had a lifelong fascination with books of travel. His readings took him all over the globe. Above all else he believed the travails of travel built character. As he scribbled in his diary on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 1856 while reading for at least the third time since 1821 the explorations of Mungo Park, "I admire the character[,] the innocence & good intention with a perseverance & discretion in times of trial that few possesses."<sup>56</sup>

The book from which he read, I should note, was Taylor's edited collection the Cyclopedia of Modern Travel. Indeed, later in Fletcher's life Taylor became an author he commonly read.

Fletcher's eleven children were encouraged to read travel accounts. He saw them as a form of practical and moral education that would advantage them in the future. One evening 1845 after his son Elijah read aloud about exploration in Africa, Fletcher wrote proudly that the boy seemed to show "some longing after a further education."<sup>57</sup> The effect of their education was evident. Of his eleven children nearly all eventually traveled outside the United States. Fletcher's oldest sons Calvin Jr. and Elijah sought success through travel. Feeling confined at Brown where his father had sent him, in 1846 Elijah set-out for the Mexico and California. Calvin Jr. elected to finish his studies at Brown before studying in Switzerland to become a missionary.

There is no evidence Taylor's father was as interested as Calvin Fletcher in books of travel, but his son was well prepared to assume the practical and moral value of such experience by the juvenile travel stories he had read as a child. By the second quarter of the nineteenth-century the rise of print-culture had given birth to a massive children's literature industry fed by parents eager to inculcate their young with the values of emerging society and thus help them to succeed. Most of this didactic genre sought to instruct readers in the virtues of self-discipline, restraint, and courage in the face of temptation. Foreign travel was a central motif.

At the farm Taylor had poured over the stories told by the avuncular old man Peter Parley about his and his friend's adventures. Peter Parley was the creation of Samuel Griswold Goodrich, the son of a Connecticut minister and onetime clerk, who

after a trip to England was inspired in 1827 to write a story for children. The name Peter Parley appears on 116 of the 170 books he published before 1859. By 1857 an estimated 7 million of his books were in print and the number would nearly double before the end of the century.<sup>58</sup> Many of the stories told by Peter Parley, and Goodrich's later favorite narrator Robert Merry, took place in distant lands. Of the other books that Goodrich published many were geographies or histories intended to inform Americans of the outside world. Peter Parley held forth on everything from the customs, forms of government, and history, to the moral qualities—typically deficient—of the peoples he described.<sup>59</sup> The later tales like The Balloon Travels of Robert Merry and his Young Friends over the Various Countries in Europe made the readers “a party to the voyage” and “participant in all that is seen and felt.”<sup>60</sup> Both of Goodrich's famed fictional characters also were the title figures of popular magazines. Reading the pages of Peter Parley's Magazine Taylor learned through his imaginary travel the need for moral accountability in a world filled with temptation and ignorance.

Jacob Abbott was the other great children's writer of the mid-nineteenth century. Raised by Puritan parents Abbott became an innovative educator and author of 117 books, including many histories of different countries. Abbott's Rollo series followed the development of an inquisitive young boy through 26 volumes. Toward the end of the series the final books, ten in all, were devoted to the boy's travels. Through their visit to distant lands with Rollo the young readers learned about the challenges of adulthood and what it takes to be successful. Accompanying his family to Europe, Rollo learned through the responsibilities thrust upon him. Traveling “will be of some advantage to” the boy, Rollo's father explained. “He will see a great many new things; and, what is

better still, he will be placed in some new situations; and so he may learn lessons of wise conduct, and presence of mind, and circumspection.”<sup>61</sup> Paris, for example, was the sort of place that encourages “thriftness and prodigality,” argued his father. Visiting it offers an opportunity to “accustom his son, in early life, to bear pecuniary responsibilities, and to exercise judgment and discretion in the use of money.” To become, in short, “more like a man.”<sup>62</sup>

Like many of the readers of these books, Taylor bore the lessons of these stories throughout his life. Indeed the juvenile travel story thrived in the post-civil war period as a means of moral inculcation. They were written by a generation of authors like William Andrus Alcott, James D. McCabe, and Daniel Clarke Eddy. Like the others Thomas Wallace Knox, author of the famed fifteen volume Boy Traveler series, had been encouraged in his childhood to see travel as an allegorical trial of character and a path towards successes. As one of the most famed self-help gurus of the Gilded Age explained, “No discipline is more necessary to the development of a broad and virtuous manhood among any class of young men, than studies travel in foreign countries.”<sup>63</sup> Toward the end of his life Taylor wrote his own. Boys of Other Countries, published in 1876, offers-up a series of stories in which “youthful courage, self-reliance, and strength of character.”<sup>64</sup> The virtue of patience was another quality taught by travel.

You must not despise a people because they are ignorant, because their habits are different, or because they sometimes annoy you by a natural curiosity. I found that by acting in a kind yet firm manner towards them, and preserving my patience and good-nature, even when it was tried by their slow and careless ways, I avoided all trouble, and even acquired their friendly good-will.<sup>65</sup>

In a society rife with competing social interests, pervasive distrust, and the need for personal connection in business, Taylor's lesson—like the warnings by Abbott regarding “conduct towards those around you in traveling”—was undoubtedly sound advice.<sup>66</sup>

### **Advantage of Foreign Learning**

The tales in Boys of Other Countries suggest the way moral character was frequently linked in the children's literature of the nineteenth-century with the advantage of practical knowledge. Jon the little Iclander who “knew something of the world, and different countries and climate” used it to befriend a wealthy Englishman, advance in school, and trade his rural poverty for a job as a school teacher. The “Young Serf” boy, another character in the book, used his fluency in French and German, taught to him by his grandfather, to save the local Baron and earn an education in St. Petersburg where he becomes a wealthy merchant. “[T]o get knowledge was the only way to get freedom!” the reader was told.<sup>67</sup>

Since the Enlightenment advanced the link between knowledge and progress, belief in the transformative power of information had grown steadily in the popular imagination. To the most deterministic of the natural philosophers of the early nineteenth-century, chance and fortune were nothing more than the result of an imprecise understanding of facts and the laws of nature.

In his youth Taylor was taught that knowledge translated into practical promise. In one of the textbooks, he later recalled, Taylor learned that America's “mode of education has the same tendency to promote an equal distribution of knowledge, and to make us emphatically a ‘republic of letters.’ [...] and tend to an equal distribution of property.” Individual potential was indistinguishable from the possession of knowledge.

The journal Flag of the Union put it simply, “Substantial information is connected with advancement.”<sup>68</sup> Thus the pursuit of learning paralleled enterprise.<sup>69</sup> By the time his family had moved to West Chester in 1839, Taylor claims to have read every one of the 122 books in the Kennett Square library.<sup>70</sup> His mother, the founder of that library, strongly encouraged his efforts. They knew that in the new economy education had certainly become an important means for attaining the skills necessary to perform the non-manual tasks. Their plans for Bayard explains why the Taylors were willing to part, in a time when the average farmer earned below \$800 annually, with the roughly \$100 a year it cost to send him to the Unionville Academy. The advantages education would offer towards Bayard’s future occupational opportunities seemed worth the cost.<sup>71</sup>

Beyond that, however, knowledge appeared to promise so much more. Useful knowledge prepared one to exploit opportunity. The Columbian Orator that deeply inscribed itself on the mind of Taylor and others of his generation explained that Americans:

acquire a portion of science as a necessary instrument of livelihood, and deem it absurd to devote our whole lives to the acquisition of implements [knowledge], without having it in our power to make them useful to ourselves or others. [...] We are all scholars of the useful; and employed in improving the works of nature, rather than in imitating them.<sup>72</sup>

Knowledge, according to a textbook used in the early years of the nation, when employed “according to the true spirit of republicanism” had “public and private utility.”<sup>73</sup>

Educators, like the schoolmaster Taylor would later describe in John Godfrey’s Fortune, were “fond of reading anecdotes of Franklin, Ledyard, Fulton, and other noted men who had risen from obscurity,” by the application of useful knowledge.<sup>74</sup> Pupils were encouraged to imitate these men. Clearly the lesson was not lost on Taylor. During

these years he studied the lives of all three. Benjamin Franklin stood above the others in his imagination. At the age of 17 Taylor thought Franklin was perhaps the most important and undervalued of the creators of the new nation because of the way the lessons offered by his life were growing in importance for the lives of people of Taylor's own time.<sup>75</sup>

The life of Benjamin Franklin presented Americans of Taylor's generation with an updated and secularized version of the Puritan travel narrative. In a rebellious flurry not unlike the wayward Robinson Crusoe, Franklin left home and crossed the ocean, where he pursued a desultory life of pleasure and fun. Yet the streets of London proved an invaluable crucible, much like Crusoe's island. Here and in the four other journeys to Europe Franklin gained insight into the nature of men and clues about how to succeed. He would later synthesize what he learned in his Autobiography and in "The Way to Wealth," the famed preface to Poor Richard's Almanack. The story of his transformation from a printer's apprentice to a national legend begins with the familiar virtues of self-discipline, perseverance, and moral courage. Yet he wed them to the enlightened arts of observation, experimentation, and reason. His descriptions of his travels to and from Europe in his autobiography offer an example. They focus on observation of nature and contemplation of its lessons. He transferred this curiosity into his famed scientific experiments. His pursuit of knowledge symbolized his quest for personal and social mastery. And certainly the fame of his scientific experiments became a source of social prestige.

Energized by Jonathan Gause's, the school teacher at the Unionville Academy, panegyrics on "self-made" manhood and the example of Franklin, Taylor diligently applied himself at school. To his mother he wrote:

Having now completed astronomy, I am principally studying the languages, and have made such proficiency in French that I am able to read Voltaire in his native language. Don't be frightened. It is not the atheistical works of Voltaire, but his tragedies [...] I am studying Latin, and am making great progress in it.<sup>76</sup>

The attempt to allay his mother's fears regarding Voltaire reveals the tension that existed between the spiritual quest of self-perfection and its secular counterpart. Yet by the mid-nineteenth century the two were coming into an uneasy alliance. Thanks in part to the growing belief that worldly success was a sign of grace, the accumulation of knowledge had become intertwined with notions of spiritual self-improvement and Christian millennialism. At the time of Taylor's childhood, in the minds of many, the Enlightenment project of accumulating objective knowledge to bring about the betterment of humankind and the Protestant pursuit of spiritual self-perfection had become thoroughly entangled.

The combined hope for spiritual perfection and worldly success spurred Taylor to undertake an ambitious program of self-study. Gathering nuts in the woods and selling them, Taylor managed to acquire a small library suited to fit his autodidactic program. He devoted a good portion of time to the continued study of Latin, French, and later, German. But his energies took him in many directions. He learned stenography and began to keep diaries. Following his early love for illustration he began a systematic program to teach himself painting. He worked his way through The Scholar's Drawing Book, studied anatomy, and learned the conventions of landscape painting.<sup>77</sup>

The disciplines Taylor undertook in his self-studies—drawing, detailed observation, journal writing, and languages—involved tasks that were part of the program created by the mid-sixteenth century humanist “travel tutors” who oversaw the rise of the Grand Tour as a formal means of education. The “Apodemik” method of “rational travel” demanded that the traveler become a critical observer and for that he must be able to communicate with those he met. The approach espoused by the German Herarius Pyrksmair required the traveler keep separate journals devoted respectively to experiences and facts.<sup>78</sup>

Taylor, of course, was not familiar with the “travel tutors” or with more recent educational guides for touring like Leopold Graf Berchthold’s 1789 The Patriotic Traveler, but he had already read travel narratives where these methods were convention and he was firmly convinced that travel was the best way to acquire knowledge. With the fellow members of the Union Academy debating society, he pondered the question of whether it was better to learn by reading or travel. Travel, they agreed, was better than any other way of learning.<sup>79</sup> The question was evidently on the mind of many at the time. In 1841 a young engraver and illustrator named Matthias Shirk Weaver reported arguing the superiority of learning by travel rather than books before a Philadelphia young men association. Recently having migrated from Springfield, Ohio, Weaver’s journals show he diligently studied travel books in order to gain knowledge that might help him gain an advantage in the tough labor market of the city.<sup>80</sup>

Of what type of travel were they thinking? The minutes from their meeting do not tell us. Perhaps the young men had enlightened explorers like Captain Cook and his faithful American crewmember John Ledyard in mind during this debate; or perhaps they

were thinking of the more mundane scholarly study abroad. As the historian William Taylor has described, the sons of the Southern planter aristocrats regularly studied law in England as a sort of rite of passage.<sup>81</sup> By the early nineteenth-century northern men with more modest social legacy were traveling to Europe to study as a way of getting ahead. As George Ticknor, an early example of the trend, explained: “The whole tour in Europe I consider a sacrifice of enjoyment to improvement.”<sup>82</sup> Ticknor might here have intentionally overstated the seriousness with which he approached his journey, he was after all writing to an anxious father, but he certainly applied himself. Ticknor, whose father was a grocer, became a Harvard professor in languages and married well.<sup>83</sup> Others, like Washington Allston in painting, Horatio Greenough in sculpting, Benjamin Silliman in geology and chemistry, William Gibson in medicine, Joseph Cogswell in library administration, and George Bancroft and William Prescott in history, returned to create new civic institutions and make their names.<sup>84</sup> By the mid-1840s travelers like New Jersey native Augustus Kinsley Garden described what he called “the love of Americans for education” and shone with pride at their diligence.<sup>85</sup>

As a boy Taylor borrowed from the Kennett Square circulating library a copy of Silliman’s 1810 A Journal of Travels in England, Holland, and Scotland. In it he read the experience of a young man from Connecticut who ventured to England to study chemistry in 1804. After his travels, Silliman became a professor at Yale and founded several prominent scientific journals. Deeply religious, Silliman’s travel letters contained elements of the Puritan morality tale. He was scandalized by London’s theaters, dancehalls, prostitutes, and upper class moral hypocrisies. But his solution to temptation

was thoroughly enlightened: he focused his attention on the accumulation of knowledge.<sup>86</sup>

With the exception of Silliman, Taylor and his classmates in the debating society probably knew little of most of the men mentioned above. Nevertheless the respect for study abroad on the lives of these men undoubtedly colored Taylor's perception of travel as a means of gaining knowledge and social prestige. Taylor shared with his classmates the admiration he held for the Prussian educational system, a position he had gathered reading John Griscom's 1819 A Year in Europe. Griscom, a chemistry professor at Queen's college [now Rutgers] and an influential reformer, spent a good deal of his widely read book celebrating the advantages of foreign education.<sup>87</sup> The spread of such views helped transform the very idea of what foreign meant. "I could never see," he later wrote of this period, "a book written in a foreign language without the most ardent desire to read it." "I remember," Taylor continued, "that I came across a copy of Wieland & Oberson and as at that time I knew nothing of German, it took me several days to understand the first verse."<sup>88</sup>

He undertook to put the skills he was developing to practice with travels into the surrounding countryside. While still at Unionville Academy he took weekend trips to the Brandywine Battlefield, to nearby Philadelphia, and the more distant Valley Forge, dutifully recording his journey, and sending his accounts to a West Chester paper. In May 1843 he took a walking trip north through New York, up the Hudson, and into the Catskills.<sup>89</sup>

His studies pushed him to believe that if he strove hard enough to master the knowledge about the world around him he could control his destiny. Travel allowed

humans to master nature through observation. Educators like Abbott in his *Rollo* books used the experience of travel to teach the inductive methodology.<sup>90</sup> This Enlightenment assumption passed as common sense in the mid-nineteenth century. It was this tradition that also informed the emphasis on objectivity and perspective in the drawings recommended by the travel tutors. Silliman's *A Journal of Travels* would have illustrated the point clearly to Taylor. Silliman wrote extensively about the geological world that he saw, deducing the cause and explaining the practical value of mineral formations. Moreover he connected this knowledge to man's growing mastery over nature. He described English mines, factories, and the machinery at work in them in great detail. That Silliman's impulse towards cognitive mastery was at least partly motivated by the yearning to control fate was poignantly evident in his 1820 book *Remarks, Made on a Short Tour, Between Hartford and Quebec*. The journey was undertaken following the death of two of his children. More reflective than the first, he contemplates questions of history as well as science but through it all is concerned about the value of knowledge to control destiny.

Like Silliman, Taylor too was a collector. From his journeys into the countryside around Chester County he assembled mineral samples, Native American artifacts, and fossils into a cabinet of curiosities. He assumed the collection of this detritus could prove vitally important to his future. Indeed he believed that the improved opportunity to collect such material was a reason itself that his father would let him study in New England.

In a similar fashion, he clipped descriptions of countries around the world from geographies, travel books, magazines, and almanacs and pasted them into scrap books.

Many of the accounts of the day, like those written by Goodrich, aimed to provide useful facts about these distant places. A legacy of the encyclopedic tradition of the Enlightenment, many works contained information such as a country's size, population, customs, climate, primary commodities, government, principle ports and much more. The appendix to William Robertson's India, a book Taylor read when he was about fourteen, provides an example. It contained "observations on the civil policy, the laws and judicial proceedings, the arts, the sciences and religious institutions of the Indians."<sup>91</sup>

Information of this sort, gleaned from the experience of travel, was in great demand, particularly by men who saw knowledge as the key to personal success. The 1837 through 1845 diaries of Isaac Mickle, a young man from Camden, New Jersey offer an illuminating example. He too pursued an intensive far-reaching program of personal study in science, history, law, and many other subjects. Books of travel played a prominent role in his reading. He was found of Parley's publications, attended numerous lectures on travel, and when he met a "young man like him traveling to see the world" one scented a whiff of envy.<sup>92</sup>

Like their father, the children of Calvin Fletcher pursued active programs of self-education. They attended lectures, practiced writing histories, kept diaries, studied natural sciences and gave talks at the local lyceum. And indeed during the 1850s several of them, like their father, became interested in Taylor. In 1854 Miles Fletcher, Calvin's fourth son, invited Taylor to speak in Greencastle, Indiana where he had organized a lyceum and studied law.<sup>93</sup>

For most the link between knowledge and spiritual improvement was taken for granted. Yet young men like Mickle and Taylor read books on natural and moral

philosophy to make sense of it all. Taylor studied works like William Paley's Natural Theology and Oliver Goldsmith's Animated Nature that purported to link the natural universe being revealed by explorers and scientists to man's emotional and spiritual nature. It was perhaps in the teachings of George Combe and Andrew Fowler that Mickle and Taylor saw a way that knowledge of nature, gained in part by travel, might help to improve one's chance for success. In the phrenological theories of Combe and his American imitators the Fowlers, Taylor became convinced of the ability to "read" the hidden character of men by the shapes of their head. His faith in phrenology may have come following an incident in which the boy was taken to a traveling phrenologist who immediately declared after examining him that he would be a great traveler.<sup>94</sup> The story might also be a testament to the power of suggestion. What is certain is that by his early teens this pseudo-science fascinated him.

The power to know the qualities of humans by simply examining their heads was a seductive one in the mid-nineteenth century. As Americans were increasingly surrounded by strangers and yet living in a society that still largely did business based simply on trust, the wish to believe character was worn upon the face drove them to see significance in every tiny bump. Julie Dyson wrote in her journal while waiting the delivery of a phrenological reading, "What can better confer on man the appellation, 'godlike,' than this power of reading with the fingers the disposition, feelings, and capabilities of man; yea, and women too[.]"<sup>95</sup> For Taylor and others this power of discernment was linked to the worldly experience of travel. Writers like Goodrich and Abbott declared the art of coming to know man's true nature was one of the great skills learned from travel. Taylor's faith in his ability to know men is repeated over and over

again in his writings, and grew stronger the more he traveled. He assured audiences in one of his lectures that:

It is among the advantages of travel, that it gives you a quick and almost unerring instinct of the nature of those you meet. As the savage who lives in close companionship with trees and rocks, understands a thousands signs which guide him on his wanderings, so a wide experience of mankind teaches us to read the hieroglyphics of the human face, and we soon learn whom to seek and whom to avoid.<sup>96</sup>

In later years some of his admirers readily believed that his wide travels had given Taylor the power to discern between men.

Underlying this pursuit of knowledge was the expectation not only that nature and the market could be mastered but that they must. As the example of phrenology shows, there lurked a fear that the failure to be able to read nature carried the potential for danger: the possibility of being taken unaware and made a fool. The accounts of travel and encounter with foreign lands that Taylor read as a boy acted as a coda of the raw possibilities of nature, the dangers of which dimly mirrored the boy's more immediate surroundings.

### **Study Abroad**

Inexorably Taylor's ambitions as a young man led him to make his imaginary travels real. Achieving his goal of traveling required all his ingenuity. The result transformed his life, much as the romance of travel and encountering other peoples suggests it would. One reason for the success enjoyed by his letters and then the book Views A-Foot, flowed from the way the narrative wed the tales of practical advancement and moral purity. His adventure materialized the moral journey so familiar to his countrymen: Taylor the poor, young, adventurous, and idealistic traveler withstood temptation, applied self-discipline and thereby overcame disadvantages to succeed.

The wish to travel must have crept over Taylor almost imperceptibly. According to Taylor he was aware of the wish to travel when quite young. “An enthusiastic desire to visit the Old World haunted me from childhood.” “I cherished a presentiment, amounting to positive belief,” he went on to say, “that I should one day behold the scenes among which my fancy had so long wandered.”<sup>97</sup> Over the years the advantage of studying abroad made him seek it all the more. In time the “confidence with which I spoke of going to London and Paris and Rome often subjected me to the ridicule of my school-fellows.” He drew encouragement from those who appreciated the boldness of his dreams and who saw the advantages travel might bring the boy. For someone in Taylor’s position, however, the chance he might manage to study abroad seemed remote. “In our quiet community,” he later explained, “the undertaking seemed gigantic, and my enthusiasm on the subject was considered little short of madness.” Nonetheless, he wrote, “My desire to visit Europe grew with the difficulties that stood in my path.”<sup>98</sup> It wove itself into the fiber of his self-identity. “I seemed instinctively,” Taylor wrote to a friend, to feel that visiting Europe “was either to carry me on to the station in the hearts of men which is my highest ambition, or to condemn me to a life of obscurity and spiritlessness.” Evidently, the journey was, he went on to say, “the aspiration of my childhood, the dream of my youth.”<sup>99</sup>

By the time Taylor turned sixteen visiting the Old World had become an imperative because of the way he linked it to his future occupational opportunities. “It almost seemed to me,” he wrote at the time, that “to relinquish my glorious dreams of the Old World” would be “like relinquishing life.”<sup>100</sup> In 1842 when he finished all the schooling his family could afford, his future was very much in doubt. The economic

slump still lingered over Chester County. It was then that thoughts of travel and the hopes he invested in it became more concrete. His autobiographical double John in John Godfrey's Fortune experienced a similar awakening. At sixteen John felt a change come over him that "began to touch and give color to the operations of my mind."

My vision did not pause at the farthest hill, but went on, eagerly into the unknown landscape beyond. I had previously talked of Sinbad and Gulliver, Robert Bruce and William Tell: all at once I became conscious that it was an earnest business. What must I do? What should I become? [...] The few occupations which found a place in our little village repelled me. My frame was slight [...] I could never swing the blacksmith's hammer [...] Moreover, had an instinctive dislike to all kinds of manual labor, except light gardening [...] My ambition—at this time but a vague formless desire—was to be a scholar, a man of learning. How this was to be attained, or what lay beyond it, I could not clearly see. I knew without being able to explain why, that the [village] was no place for me.<sup>101</sup>

Fortunately for Taylor his interest in the romance of travel had already begun to pay dividends. On the strength of the travel letters he had published in the local Village Record, the editor offered the young man an apprenticeship. "For one who could not be made a farmer, had no liking for teaching, and showed a genuine fondness for books and writing, the most direct training," wrote one contemporary observer, "was plainly to be had in the printing office."<sup>102</sup> It was also the fulfillment of his parents' plan.

During breaks from work Taylor would frequent the circulating library in the town bookstore. In his spare time he composed poems and began sending them off to The Saturday Evening Post. His first publication, appropriately called "The Soliloquy of a Young Poet," was earnest and frank:

High hopes spring up within;  
Hopes of the future—thoughts of glory—fame  
Which prompt my mind to toil, and bid me win  
That dream—a deathless name.

Yes, I would write my name  
With the star's burning ray on heaven's broad scroll,

That I might still the restless thirst for fame  
Which fills my soul.<sup>103</sup>

Taylor shrewdly took advantage of the Post's connection with Rufus W. Griswold by writing the famed literary magnet about his ambitions. His confession was calculated. Griswold was the editor of Graham's Magazine, a respected journal of the period.

"Griswold," Taylor wrote a friend, "said that the poem I sent him would appear in April in the magazine, and requested me to contribute often and to call on him when I came to town. I never was more surprised in my life."<sup>104</sup> Within two years, at Griswold's "urging," Taylor had decided to publish a small book of poems.

Taylor hoped that he could sell enough copies of the volume to raise money to begin an education abroad. He would supplement this meager sum by writing travel letters. His plan followed in the footsteps of one of the most famous travelers of his boyhood: Nathaniel Parker Willis. Between 1831 and 1836, Willis, tutored under Goodrich at the Peter Parley Magazine, lived abroad, writing back lively letters that amassed a huge audience. During these years he contributed over 139 letters under the heading of 'Penciling by the Way,' published first in the New York Mirror, and then in over 500 papers throughout the United States. They enthralled the young Taylor. "When a boy of ten years," Taylor later recalled, "I read Willis's 'Penciling by the Way' as they appeared week to week in the country newspaper, and the contemplation of those charming pictures of scenery and society filled me with a thousand dreams and aspirations." Now years later it occurred to him that he could convince others to support him financially through the same means. When first encouraged by Griswold to publish the volume of poetry, Taylor wrote to Willis, with whom he had begun a deferential correspondence, "the idea struck me that by so doing I might, if [the poems] should be

favorably noticed, obtain a newspaper correspondence which would enable me to take the start.” The small profit he reaped from the slim volume was set aside for a journey he had prepared the whole of his short life.<sup>105</sup>

Women were certainly not excluded from such ambitions. Not unlike Taylor, Nantucket native Maria Mitchell, born 1818, the daughter of a bank cashier and advocate of self-culture, described in her diaries her efforts to save money so that she might travel. From her “earliest childhood,” she confided, I have “had a great desire to travel to Europe.” The subjects discussed in her reading clubs and the lectures she attended throughout her formative years undoubtedly stirred her interest. She eagerly awaited each steamer which brought news of events from across the Atlantic. To be prepared she read the latest books of travel. Working at the local athenaeum she managed to save enough money from her salary to begin the trip in 1857.<sup>106</sup>

Taylor’s opportunity came much sooner. In the spring of 1844 his chance appeared at hand. His cousin, about to begin studying in Germany, invited Taylor to accompany him. Although Taylor was short of money, he set his plan in motion. Less than two weeks before the day of departure, Taylor managed to persuade the editors of the Saturday Evening Post and United States Gazette each to advance him \$50 for twelve letters. He received another \$40 from Griswold and deemed that enough with which to begin. With his plans in place he wrote to a friend “I feel as if nothing is impossible.”<sup>107</sup> What followed gave some truth to the sentiment. After the next two years abroad—during which he traveled by foot across Europe, studied in Germany, and wrote letters for pay—Taylor landed back in the United States a minor celebrity. His letters had struck a resonant chord.

Many Americans could identify with the persona projected by Taylor in his letters. Here was a young man who hailed from the countryside, a farmer's son, and a printer's apprentice. None of these traits promised one a secure occupation in that day. A growing number of printers, like other skilled craftsmen, found the way towards independence blocked by the shift towards factory production. For many such middling Americans Taylor was a man who had faced troubles similar to their own. Willis astutely recognized that this would be one of Taylor's primary appeals. In the preface that Willis generously provided he made continual reference to Taylor's humble but honorable first vocation as a printer (see appendix A for an illustration of Taylor from 1844).<sup>108</sup>

Taylor's experience of Europe was different from that of many of the well-heeled writers who preceded him. Readers ascertained quickly from his letters that Taylor was a self-sufficient individual in both economy and spirit; a fact borne out in the book's subtitle "Europe seen with Knapsack and Staff." In carrying out his long held dream against considerable odds, Taylor embodied the kind of independence hailed by early Americans as an ideal. But it was how he managed it that so impressed his audience. First, he utilized his skills as a laborer to achieve independence. This confirmed the virtue of useful production at the heart of republican morality and the equation of work and freedom central to economic liberalism. As Greeley observed, Taylor left home "a good type-setter [...] and so stopped and worked at his trade whenever his funds ran short."<sup>109</sup> Interestingly, however Taylor never actually employed his skills as a printer during the trip. The story of his doing so, suggestively planted in the public mind by Willis' preface in which he mentions the boy's training, was so pleasing to Greeley's liberal-republican convictions that he convinced himself of its truth.

In addition, it was evident that Taylor was willing to sacrifice both physically and emotionally to make his dream of visiting the Old World a reality. He endured hunger, physical exertion, and illness. His journey, in other words, exemplified the values of self-denial, discipline, and determination. Taylor heightened the impression that his journey was made possible by the quality of his character by not bemoaning the privations he endured. He described his travails cheerfully, without affectation—or so many thought—and in terms that evoked comparison to the trials of spiritual voyage. “I was obliged,” he wrote in the preface of Views, “to use the strictest economy—to live on pilgrim fare and do penance in rain and cold.”<sup>110</sup> My means several times entirely failed; but I was always relieved from serious difficulty through unlooked-for friends or some unexpected turn of fortune.” One reviewer of the book summarized the point nicely.

Most ancient men would say, that for a journeyman printer, without property, without friends, without encouragement, to undertake the tour of Europe, was the wildest of all human visions; and we doubt not that Mr. Taylor received rich presents of this kind of sympathy from those who knew his adventurous design. But those prudent and estimable persons were looking, all the while, to external advantages for the purpose, and making no account of inward resources; when experience shows, that, whether to trudge through Europe, or to foot it through life—for John Wesley says there is no carriage-road to heaven—the strong mind and strong heart are more than a match for them all.<sup>111</sup>

The reliance on foot power symbolized the spirit of republican community, simplicity and independence of his journey.<sup>112</sup> By his reckoning, Taylor traveled 3,000 miles through Europe. His Europe was more the world of the villages through which he passed, and the simple people he met, than the pleasures engaged in by wealthy travelers. The ever-savvy Willis had recognized immediately the advantage Taylor’s experience offered for connecting with the reading public. He suggested the title of the book—one that Taylor did not much like at first—in order to emphasize the point.

Title aside much of Taylor's experience was thoroughly pedestrian. He introduced readers to the simple fare and lodgings afforded by local inns or even the farmer's barn. He described sharing the bitter cold and the meager rations with the poorest of those he encountered; along the country roads of Germany and Austria he befriended itinerate craftsman; at evening's end he supped with local farm laborers. He took-up with students, who "with their ardent love for everything republican [always] received an American heartily," and joined in their festivities of song and drink. Much of his experience seemed to reject aristocratic tourism, and its exclusive interest in the denizens of elite culture.<sup>113</sup>

In later years nothing brings Taylor's perspective in sharper focus than his belief that travel, while pleasurable and informative, was work rather than leisure. It became a typical theme among American travelers who sought to stake out an acceptable rationale for their peripatetic pleasures. At mid-century, before the cultural reorientation from production to consumption had made significant headway, the emerging phenomenon of tourist travel was still perceived by many as wasteful leisure. It was especially susceptible to criticism from producerist republican ideologues. For the most part, Taylor implied that his travels constituted industry. He defined labor in different ways. To Longfellow, Taylor framed his travels "as so many phases of an education;" to others he called them his "university days."<sup>114</sup> Still more often, he referred to them simply as "toil." "In other words," Taylor once wrote, travel "offered me a chance of working my way."<sup>115</sup>

No glibness accompanied Taylor's reference to "working his way." He earnestly believed his travels were labor. He detested the use of other words like "wanderings,

skipping, meanderings, and the like” for they slighted the perception of travel as both honest and productive.<sup>116</sup> But Taylor saved his deepest resentment for the accusation that because he had traveled long and often he must have something of a “roving propensity” and by inference an unstable, possibly prodigal, nature. He abhorred being asked, as it often happened, how long he could remain comfortably “at home.” It was a question that “suggests I was laboring under a sort of St. Vitus’s dance [. . .] incapable of remaining long in any one spot.”<sup>117</sup> In his lecture “The Philosophy of Travel” we learn how much this bothered Taylor. There he explained that for “personal reasons” he wished to make others aware of the “nobler aims of travel” and rescue “the practice from the imputation of being merely the result of an unsettled state of mind, or an unstable character.”<sup>118</sup> Much of his 1868 farewell to travel writing, “A Familiar Letter to the Reader,” fixated upon the same theme. His justifications for travel heavily depended upon the explanation of necessity. Throughout his career as a travel writer Taylor often shielded his own delight in his adventures behind explanations of this sort. Taylor’s means of paying for the journey, his writing about them, made the suggestion that travel was more work than pleasure easy to sustain. In the letter to his readers, he claimed “a succession of circumstances” prompted his travels: the need for education, for improving his health, and for performing his duties as a journalist.<sup>119</sup> Framed as necessity, travel became labor.

Authorship afforded a means of claiming travel as work. The distillation of one’s thought into words—the production of letters, fiction, poetry, or even a journal—required time and effort. The association of travel with education offered another. Travel required study and preparation. The claim that travel was pursued for self-improvement could allow one to transfigure rest into work. In order to gain the most of one’s

experience required time to reflect. Thus even leisure, the antithesis of labor, became work. In order to learn from one's peregrinations, Taylor insisted, "rest is as important to travel as sleep is to toil."<sup>120</sup>

Of course the point of depicting travel as labor was two fold: to make it acceptable to those who doubted its worth and shed further merit upon the traveler. Again the association of travel with writing facilitated both. By mid-century, print culture was no longer a peripheral part of the social or industrial economy. Writing, even when it did not provide a living, took on its own prestige as a form of labor. The keen desire of travelers to portray their journeys as productive, therefore make it both acceptable and even admirable, drove the growth in the number of travel narratives.

To others Taylor's exploits offered proof of the virtue to travel. No reader could doubt after reading Views that the author possessed the qualities of ambition, drive, resourcefulness, and risk taking. Whatever the dilemma, he found a way out. Simply getting to Europe showed inventiveness and savvy. He embodied assertiveness. All were attributes associated with the emerging faith in liberalism sweeping over the country with the expansion of the market economy. Readers of Taylor's letters saw in his adventure not the lark of a young man but an expression of the boundless energy and hope in individual progress made possible by assiduous labor. By husbanding his resources and investing them carefully Taylor might make a handsome return in terms of future employment. Taylor, Willis simply explained, was a "self-made man."<sup>121</sup> Inventive examples of the pursuit of self-interest had a broad appeal among the craftsmen and mechanics who admired Taylor. They shared Taylor's ambition to achieve bourgeois status.<sup>122</sup>

The risks Taylor took in pursuing his dreams were recognized. Readers today may overlook the dangers his journey entailed both real and imagined, and miss how it was seen then as a striking act of individualism. Travel in Taylor's day was no easy endeavor. But the dangers involved appeared especially clear in Taylor's case with so little between him and penury. Again we must remember that travel not necessitated by work was seen as the privilege of the wealthy. Just as the earlier reviewer had speculated, sober individuals had strongly urged Taylor to set aside this reckless fancy. Horace Greeley later warned others, as he had Taylor, that it was far better, and by that he meant safer:

to stay at home, apply yourself to some useful branch of productive industry [. . .] and accumulate a little independence whereon, by and by, to travel (if you choose) as a gentlemen, and not with but a sheet of paper between you and starvation. It is bad to be ragged and hungry at home; it is infinitely worse to be destitute in a foreign country.

Naturally though, the fact that Taylor succeeded where the fear of failure loomed threateningly only added to the public's appreciation. Longfellow wrote him inquisitively soon after finishing Views: "How could you accomplish so much, with such slight help and appliances? It shows strength of will—the central fire of all great deeds and words—that must lead you far in whatever you undertake."<sup>123</sup> Rather than simply surviving, Taylor prospered.<sup>124</sup> For many he had transfigured their idea of travel: from the decadent activity of the wealthy, to a practical, even beneficial trial of character not unlike the spiritual allegories that they knew so well. Within a decade of his return Views had gone through 20 editions.

Part of what made Views popular was the democratic appeal of the voyage. It suggested that anyone could travel to the places that were once thought impossible for

those without concern for money. Taylor had defied this elitist assumption. Several well-known travelers had estimated the cost of his journey would cost anywhere from \$500 to \$1500, he told readers. Beaming with republican pride he reported that at the end of six months he had spent only \$130. He proved “that the glorious privilege of looking on the scenes of the Old World need not be confined to people of wealth and leisure,” Taylor said. “It may be enjoyed by all who can occasionally forgo a little bodily comfort for the sake of mental and spiritual gain.”<sup>125</sup>

Taylor’s democratic travel blended the republican and puritan values of simplicity, self-reliance and discipline with the virtues of independence, ambition and aggressive self-assertion favored by economic and political liberalism. The two ideological strains coexisted within Taylor’s writings because each had its more extreme attitudes watered a bit when poured into a pool of colorless democratic sentiments. This too must have endeared Taylor to his readers, many of whom were locked in an uneasy accommodation of older republican values with the realities of America’s expanding market economy.

It also offered its readers a comforting sense of their own potential to succeed. The fact that a keen-eyed boy from West Chester traveled to Europe on a few hundred dollars and become famous doing it, made it seem that almost anything was possible with the proper amount of preparation and personal determination. And indeed many tried. So many that Sidney Everett, the secretary of the U.S. legation in Germany, recalled that the book was the “innocent cause of my spending various sums on indigent would-be travelers, whose imagination had been fired by reading [Views], and who, in endeavoring to repeat the experience, had forgotten that they had not Mr. Taylor’s brains.”<sup>126</sup>

Comparisons with Franklin began almost immediately after Taylor returned. Again they were led by Willis, who emphasized Taylor's training as a printer and his Pennsylvania heritage as additional links with Franklin. Over time the comparison became a commonplace. By the time he died, even the German poet Berthold Auerbach told listeners at the funeral that Taylor was "born in the fatherland of Benjamin Franklin; and like [Franklin] work[ed] [his] way upward from a lowly labor [sic] to be an apostle of the spirit of purity and freedom, and a representative of [the American] people among a foreign people."<sup>127</sup>

In the years following the publication of Views, Taylor continued successfully to blend the themes of moral virtue and success in his narratives of travel in the American West, North Africa, Europe and Asia. In Eldorado, or, Adventures in the Path of Empire, in which he reported on the California Gold Rush, Taylor told his readers that "those who are familiar with geology, or by carefully noting the character of the soil and situation where gold is already found have learned its indications, rarely fail[.]" Those who complained of not having success were generally, he went on to say, "disheartened by the severe labor necessary to be undergone and bereft of that active and observing spirit which could not fail to win success at last[.]" These men compared "diggings to a lottery" but "there is no such thing as accident in Nature, and in proportion as men understand her, the more sure a clue they have to her buried treasures."<sup>128</sup> The message was that anyone could succeed with knowledge and character.

Taylor also continued to present his travels in a way that made others feel they could follow in his footsteps. He retained the earthy, pedestrian, tone of his writing. A reviewer of his A Journey to Central Africa explained Taylor's appeal this way.

Mr. Taylor is one of those travelers who never overwhelms us with learning, gathered out of book; who never nauseates us by an excess of sentiment; who never tries how finely he can write; and, what is rare, who never astounds us by miraculous adventures and whopping lies. He tells us what he has seen in a sensible, direct way, and yet with sufficient clearness and fullness of detail to enable us to become interested compagnons du voyage.<sup>129</sup>

He made the same impression in person. His unaffected speaking manner—what one listener to his lectures called “dignified, simple, and unaffected”—endeared him to those who preferred virtues of simplicity of expression.<sup>130</sup> As one reporter in Springfield, Ohio said of Taylor in 1860, “Everybody likes Bayard Taylor because he is a man of and from the people and puts on no airs.”<sup>131</sup>

### Conclusion

Within months after Taylor’s death in 1879 one of the most renowned ministers of self-help and success, Russell H. Conwell, rushed a biography of the traveler into print. “No apology is needed,” he commented in the preface, “for writing such a biography.” “No text-book of morals, or of general history, is so effective in educating the young as the annals of well-spent years[.]” What better life to examine than Taylor’s? After all, Taylor’s “adventures were so many, his struggles so severe, his experience so varied, and his final success so remarkable” that it was difficult to imagine a better model for others to follow.<sup>132</sup>

To Conwell, Taylor symbolized something so vitally important about the nature of success that it was at the center of his famed “Acres of Diamonds” inspirational stump. “Acres of Diamonds” was a parable of a Persian farmer who abandons his land to search the world for wealth. He dies before learning a mine of diamonds sat in his own backyard. Conwell, of course, did not mean to discourage the pursuit of dreams or of travel to achieve it. The aim of the Persian farmer was good and his belief that hopes for

fulfillment lay in exotic lands was a quite understandable assumption. But as the story reveals, the road to riches—both material and personal—must begin first in oneself.

For Conwell, Taylor modeled the lesson because his travels were a success due to his character. Through discipline, self-denial, and fearlessness, Taylor turned the world into his own acres of diamonds. At a moment when the changing economic conditions and social philosophy were encouraging a shift towards enterprise, Taylor's rise to fame gratified a nation craving for inspiration in the ways of success. His story proved particularly interesting to many because of the way it tapped into some of the core myths of the culture. One was the link between travel into foreign lands and opportunity. Another saw this same journey as a spiritual trial, where the traveler confronts evil and temptation, and if virtuous, returns home a hero.

What made Taylor a success for Conwell was not simply his wealth and fame. According to Conwell, Taylor deserved to be honored because he was a man of aesthetic and moral sentiment as well. He had transformed himself not only into a success but something even more admirable: a gentleman. This link between the romance of travel and encounter with foreign peoples, and the notion of gentility, is the subject of the next chapter.

---

<sup>1</sup> Bayard Taylor, *At Home and Abroad*, 1<sup>st</sup> series (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1859), 2.

<sup>2</sup> On the idea of "boundlessness" in Jacksonian America see John Higham, *From Boundlessness to Consolidation: The Transformation of American Culture, 1848-1860* (William L. Clement Library, 1969).

<sup>3</sup> Bayard Taylor, "Philosophy of Travel," Lecture Box, 7, Bayard Taylor Collection [hereafter cited as BTC], Chester County Historical Society, West Chester Pennsylvania [hereafter cited as CCHS].

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Henrietta G. Bastalick, *Kennett Square: Yesterday and Today. A History of the Borough of Kennett Square in the Country of Chester in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (Kennett Square: KNA Press, 1982), op. cit. On the growth of regional economies around cities like Philadelphia see Diane Lindstrom, *Economic Development in the Philadelphia Region, 1810-1850* (New York, 1978).

<sup>6</sup> *West Chester: Daily Local News West Chester Centennial Souvenir, 1799-1899* (Daily Local News, 1900), 9, 11, 20. See Douglas R. Harper's fine description of the pre-Civil War period in "If the must fight": *A Civil War History of Chester County, Pennsylvania* (West Chester, Pa.: Chester County Historical

---

Society, 1990), op cit. See also Futhey and Gilbert Cope, History of Chester County, and Samuel W. Pennypacker, Annals of Phoenixville Vicinity (Philadelphia, 1872).

<sup>7</sup> Historians debate the period and process of rural transformation to capitalism. On this and similar issues see Allan Kulikoff, "The Transformation to Capitalism in Rural America," William and Mary Quarterly 46 (1989): 120-144. Little of this debate affects the thesis of this study since it is widely accepted that the transformation had either occurred or was in the process of happening during the period of Bayard Taylor youth.

<sup>8</sup> Bayard Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune (NY: G. P. Putnam, 1864), 10-11.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Robert V. Remini, The Revolutionary Age of Andrew Jackson (New York, 1976), 5.

<sup>10</sup> Taylor, At Home and Abroad, series 1, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Albert H. Smyth, Bayard Taylor (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1896).

<sup>12</sup> Taylor, At Home and Abroad, series 1, 2.

<sup>13</sup> Freeman Hunt, Lives of the American Merchant (New York, 1969). Quoted in Larzer Ziff, Literary Democracy: The Declaration of Cultural Independence in America (New York: Penguin, 1981), 88.

<sup>14</sup> Jonathan Goldstein, Philadelphia and the China Trade, 1682-1846: Commercial, Cultural, and Attitudinal Effects (University Park: Penns. State UP, 1978), 1-2.

<sup>15</sup> On the India trade see M. K. Manchandra, India and America (Chandigarh: YMHA, 1976), 49.

<sup>16</sup> Also see Morrison, Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783-1860 (New York: New York University Press, 1970), 100, 108.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>18</sup> Van Wyck Brooks, Fenollosa and His Circle (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1962), 2.

<sup>19</sup> On the prevalence of Asian goods in American homes see Carl Crossman, An Exhibition and Sale of Paintings and Objects of the China Trade, October 20-November 21, 1969 (brochure), Childs Gallery, Boston.

<sup>20</sup> Bayard Taylor, "Autobiographical Sketch," item 27, Box 7, Bayard Taylor Papers [hereafter cited as BTP], Cornell University Special Collections, Ithaca, New York [hereafter cited as CUSC]. Also quoted in Marie Hansen-Taylor and Horace E. Scudder, Life and Letters of Bayard Taylor, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1884), 1:11.

<sup>21</sup> Taylor, "Autobiographical Sketch." Wonder of the World was a short lived serial published the year of Taylor's birth, 1825. Bayard Taylor, By-Ways of Europe (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1867), 159-160.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Sellers, The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 370-371.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Croom Beatty, Bayard Taylor: Laureate of the Gilded Age (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1936), see chapter one and two. On the impact of print-culture see Donald Zboray, A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the Reading Public (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). On the history of the popular magazine see Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines, 2 vols, (1938).

<sup>24</sup> Cushing Strout, The American Image of the Old World (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 63. The correlation between travel and knowledge were clearly drawn in works like Daniel Adams' Geography; or, a Description of the World. See also the supplemental texts to this book A Key to the Questions of Adams' Geography: Together with an Account of the Principal Countries, Kingdoms, States, Cities and Towns of the World.

<sup>25</sup> Bayard Taylor, Views A-Foot; or Europe seen with Knapsack and Staff (New York: Wiley & Putnam, 1846), 17.

<sup>26</sup> Washington Irving, Journals and Notebooks, vol. 2 (1807-1822), ed. Walter A Reichart and Lillian Schlissel (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969-1986), 65.

<sup>27</sup> Washington Irving, The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent., vol. 2 in The Works of Washington Irving (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1860-1863), 14.

<sup>28</sup> Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky, Adrift in the Old World: The Psychological Pilgrimage of Washington Irving (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988).

<sup>29</sup> Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950), especially chapter 6.

<sup>30</sup> On the place of Irving and Cooper in early American publishing see William Charvat, The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800-1870 (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1968).

<sup>31</sup> For a discussion of Irving related to these issues see Rubin-Dorsky Jeffrey excellent Adrift in the Old World: The Psychological Pilgrimage of Washington Irving (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

<sup>32</sup> On the life of Cooper's father and its impact on his son see Alan Taylor, William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic (New York: Vintage, 1995).

<sup>33</sup> West Chester Daily Local News, 29 March 1878.

<sup>34</sup> On the depression see Samuel Rezneck, "The Social History of an American Depression, 1837-1943," American Historical Review 40 (1935): 662-687.

<sup>35</sup> Philip Hone, The Diary of Philip Hone, 1828-1851, 2 vols., Allan Nevins, ed. (New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1969) 2:614.

<sup>36</sup> Horace Greeley, Recollections of a Busy Life (New York: J. P. Ford and Company, 1868). For a wide ranging look at the effect of the market and early manufacturing revolutions on American life see Charles Sellers, The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>37</sup> The town is referred to as a "mini-city" in Harper's interesting "If the must fight" book on West Chester during the Civil War mentioned above.

<sup>38</sup> For another example of the sort of transformation taking place in towns like West Chester during this period see Anthony F. C. Wallace, Rockdale: The Growth of an American Village in the Early Industrial Revolution (New York, 1978).

<sup>39</sup> West Chester County cabinetmakers exemplify the process. Historian Berry Kessler has shown that in the early nineteenth century market demand drove a large number of farmers in the valley to cabinetmaking. By the 1830s these small widely dispersed shops gave way to a few larger and often mechanized makers situated along the main roads and in the towns of the county. Here, as in other areas, the traditional craftsman/apprentice relationship began to change as the former sought to hire more workers who they paid wages rather than trained, and they employed organizational as well as technological innovations that reduced the need for skill. See Barry Allen Kessler, "Of Workshops and Warerooms: The Economic and Geographic Transformation of Furniture Making in Chester County, Pennsylvania, 1780-1850" (M.A. thesis, University of Delaware, 1987); also see Stuart M. Blumin, The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 407. More generally, on the changes in work for craftsmen see Bruce Laurie, Artisans into Workers: Labor in Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Noonday Press, 1989); Christopher Clark, The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); Jonathan Prude, The Coming of Industrial Order: Town and Factory Life in Rural Massachusetts, 1810-1860 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>40</sup> Non-manual labor, in which individuals worked with their minds rather than their hands, rapidly expanded with the market and industrializing economy. In Utica, New York, the historian Mary Ryan has shown the number of "retail and office workers, known by the generic title of 'clerks,' increased a phenomenal 7,500 percent between 1817 and 1850." By mid-century white-collar non-manual businessmen and employees comprised—when one includes independent proprietors and professionals—nearly 40 percent of the urban labor force. And then too, many believed, like their journeymen counterparts, such employment led eventually to the starting of one's own business.

<sup>41</sup> Mary P. Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 108; see also table on page 254. Blumin, The Emergence of the Middle Class, 74. Nicholas K. Brombell, By the Sweat of the Brow: Literature and Labor in Antebellum America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

<sup>42</sup> Taylor, "Autobiographical Sketch." Also quoted in Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters 1:11.

<sup>43</sup> The source for these comments are notes written by Marie Hansen Taylor of interviews she conducted with Taylor's family after his death. Item 67, Box 8, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>44</sup> Village Record, 16 February 1858

<sup>45</sup> On the objectives of some artisans more interested in the values of republicanism see Bruce Laurie, "We Are Not Afraid to Work: Master Mechanics and the Market, Revolution in the Antebellum North," in Bledstein, The Middling Sorts.

<sup>46</sup> On the psychological impact of these concerns on middle-class America see Barbara Ehrenreich, Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990).

<sup>47</sup> John Bunyan, Pilgrims Progress (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classic Ethereal Library), 9.

<sup>48</sup> Julia A. [Parker] Dyson, Life and Thoughts (Boston: Whittemore, Niles, and Hall, 1856), 6, 80.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Johnson, A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837 (New York, 1978).

<sup>50</sup> It has been argued that poor Americans favored the New Light evangelical message, but that revivalists like Gurney who emphasized arminianism and downplayed the radicalism of antinomian doctrine found favor among the urban middle class. The great exponent of the view that there was a dual and competing cultural war within the 2<sup>nd</sup> Great Awakening is Charles Sellers in his The Market Revolution. He sees the conflict as one between an older self-sufficient society and the new capitalist order. I think Sellers has overstated the case. It is my argument here that individuals like Taylor, of moderate beginnings, were certainly interested in exploiting the liberal marketplace. For more about this and other issues see William E. Gienapp, Iver Bernstein, and Herbert Hovenkamp debate in the Journal of Policy History, no. 2, 6 (1994): 233-281.

<sup>51</sup> From Emerson's journals 5 May 1837. Ralph Waldo Emerson, The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. Edward W. Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1903-04), 4: 209.

<sup>52</sup> Johnson, A Shopkeeper's Millennium, 8.

<sup>53</sup> Chance, it could be argued, was the market interpretation of the notion of fate. Through conversion individuals stacked the deck against chance by reducing fate to the loving will of God.

<sup>54</sup> On the idea of chance, its connection to the rise of the marketplace, and its importance to culture in nineteenth century American life see Ann Fabian's illuminating Card Sharps, Dream Books, and Bucket Shops: Gambling in 19<sup>th</sup> Century America (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). Also see Karen Haltunian, Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870 (New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press, 1982).

<sup>55</sup> Bayard Taylor, "Diary of 1842," 18 March 1842, item 42, Box 12, BTP, CUSP.

<sup>56</sup> Calvin Fletcher, The Diary of Calvin Fletcher: Including Letters to and from Calved Fletcher, 9 vols., eds. Gayle Thornbrouogh and Paula Corpuz (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1983), 5:579. On Fletcher first reading of Mungo Park's adventures see volume 1:82.

<sup>57</sup> 16 March 1845, *ibid.*, 3:128.

<sup>58</sup> Daniel Roselle, Samuel Griswold Goodrich, Creator of Peter Parley: A Study of His Life and Work (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1968).

<sup>59</sup> See Samuel G. Goodrich, The Balloon Travels of Robert Merry and his Young Friends over the Various Countries in Europe (New York: J. C. Derby, 1857), 192.

<sup>60</sup> Goodrich, Balloon Travels, 1.

<sup>61</sup> [Jacob Abbott], Rollo's Travels (Boston: Thomas Webb, 1839), 8-9.

<sup>62</sup> Jacob Abbott, Rollo in Paris (Boston: W. J. Reynolds and Company, 1854), 34-35.

<sup>63</sup> Russell H. Conwell, The Life, Travels, and Literary Career of Bayard Taylor (Boston: B. B. Russell, 1879), 54.

<sup>64</sup> Bayard Taylor, Boys of Other Countries (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1876), 1.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>66</sup> Abbott, Rollo's Travels, 45.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>68</sup> Quoted Ronald J. Zboray, A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 126.

<sup>69</sup> Information was seen as an integral feature of the free, or democratic, marketplace. Educational self-improvement produced both individual and social progress. By the beginning of the late 1820s public and private schools began to spread across the country. Nationwide in 1840, 38 percent of white males between 5 and 19 were enrolled in schools, a figure dramatically pulled down by the less commercial or democratic South. In the Northeast the number stood at nearly 82 percent, while it was 55 percent in the Mid-Atlantic, where Taylor lived.

<sup>70</sup> Taylor, "Autobiographical Sketch." For the number and types of books held at the library see Kennet Square Library Company, Charter, Constitution, By-Laws, and Catalogue of Books (Chester, Pennsylvania: Y. S. Walter, 1843).

<sup>71</sup> Three factors interceded to prevent Bayard from becoming a farmer: the declining prospects of success in agriculture, Bayard's evident disinterest in working with his hands, and the family's ambitions. For statistical data see Sellers, Market Revolution, 369; Jeanne Boydston, Home and Work: Housework,

- Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 70; and Edward Pessen, Riches, Class, and Power Before the Civil War (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1973).
- <sup>72</sup> Bingham, The Columbia Orator, 299.
- <sup>73</sup> Jedidiah Morse, Geography Made Easy (Boston, 1791), 87.
- <sup>74</sup> Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune, 38.
- <sup>75</sup> Taylor, "America," 7, Lecture Box, BTC, CCHS.
- <sup>76</sup> Bayard Taylor to Rebecca Way Taylor, 18 March 1840, Bayard Taylor Papers [hereafter cited as BTP], Houghton Library, Harvard College, Cambridge, Massachusetts [hereafter cited as HL]. Part of this letter is reproduced in Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:17-18.
- <sup>77</sup> Bayard Taylor, "Diary of 1842," item, 42, Box 12, BTC, CUSC.
- <sup>78</sup> For a discussion of this history see E. S. Bates, Touring in 1600: A Study in the Development of Travel as a Means of Education (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1911) and Eric J. Leed's wonderfully insightful The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 184-192.
- <sup>79</sup> Notebook, "Unionville Junior Debating Society," Box 167, CCHS.
- <sup>80</sup> 23 January 1841, "Diary," item 752, Weaver Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio.
- <sup>81</sup> William R. Taylor, Cavalier & Yankee: The Old South and American National Character (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), see chapter 1.
- <sup>82</sup> Quoted in Strout, The American Image, 64.
- <sup>83</sup> Taylor, Cavalier & Yankee, 40-41.
- <sup>84</sup> For further discussion of the impact of study abroad see Strout, The American Image, 60-70.
- <sup>85</sup> Augustus Kinsley Garden, Old Wine in New Bottles (New York: C. S. Francis & Company, 1848), 163, see also 216-222.
- <sup>86</sup> Benjamin Silliman, A Journal of Travels in England, Holland, and Scotland, and of Two Passages over the Atlantic, in the Years 1805 and 1806, 2 vols. (New York: E. Sargeant, 1810). See Michael Brown, Benjamin Silliman: A Life in the Young Republic (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989).
- <sup>87</sup> John Griscom, A Year in Europe (New York, 1819). On Griscom's life see the Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography, ed. James Grant Wilson, et al., 6 vols. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1887-1889).
- <sup>88</sup> Taylor, "Autobiographical Sketch."
- <sup>89</sup> Taylor, At Home and Abroad, series 2, see chapter 1.
- <sup>90</sup> For an example see Abbott, Rollo's Travels, 152-153.
- <sup>91</sup> William Robertson, India: An Historical Desquison Concerning the Knowledge which the Ancients had of India (London: A. Strahan & T. Cadell, 1794), title page.
- <sup>92</sup> Isaac Mickle, A Gentleman of Much Promise: The Diary of Isaac Mickle, 1837-1845, edited Philip English Mackey (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1977), 392.
- <sup>93</sup> 18 April 1854, Fletcher, The Diary, 5:209.
- <sup>94</sup> The story was described to Taylor biographer Albert H. Smyth, see Bayard Taylor (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1896), 19-20.
- <sup>95</sup> Dyson, Life and Thoughts, 43.
- <sup>96</sup> Taylor, "Philosophy of Travel," 19-20.
- <sup>97</sup> Taylor, Views, 35.
- <sup>98</sup> Taylor, By-Ways, 8.
- <sup>99</sup> Taylor to John B. Phillips, n.d. [1844-45], Box 6, Bayard Taylor Collection, CUSP. On his early thoughts of travel see Taylor, Views, comments from introduction in editions after 1855. Also see Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 33-35.
- <sup>100</sup> Taylor to John B. Phillips, n.d. [1844-45], Box 6, Bayard Taylor Collection, CUSP.
- <sup>101</sup> Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune, 5-6.
- <sup>102</sup> Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:21-22.
- <sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.
- <sup>104</sup> Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:31.
- <sup>105</sup> Taylor, Views, x. On the early publishing industry in New York and during Willis' life see Van Wyck Brooks, The World of Washington Irving (1944).
- <sup>106</sup> Marie Mitchell, Life, Letters, and Journals (Freeport, New York: Kendall, Phebe Mitchell, 1971), 47.
- <sup>107</sup> Taylor to John B. Phillips, 30 June 1844, Wermuth, Selected Letters, 49-51.
- <sup>108</sup> Taylor, Views, ix.

- 
- <sup>109</sup> Horace Greeley, Recollections of a Busy Life (New York: J. P. Ford and Company, 1868), 326.
- <sup>110</sup> Taylor, Views, xi.
- <sup>111</sup> "Taylor's Views Afoot in Europe," The North American Review, 64 (April 1847), 483-500, 484.
- <sup>112</sup> Robin Jarvis, Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel (New York: St. Martin Press, 1997).
- <sup>113</sup> Taylor, Views, 399.
- <sup>114</sup> Taylor to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 30 December 1866, Wermuth, Selected Letters, 296
- <sup>115</sup> Taylor, By-Ways, 9.
- <sup>116</sup> Taylor to George Boker, 11 September 1854, Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters 1:286.
- <sup>117</sup> Taylor, By-Ways, 10.
- <sup>118</sup> Taylor, "Philosophy of Travel," 11, Lecture Box, BTC, CCHS.
- <sup>119</sup> Taylor, By-Ways, 9-10.
- <sup>120</sup> Taylor, "Philosophy of Travel," 15.
- <sup>121</sup> Taylor, Views, x. On the idea of the self-made man see Wyllie, Self-Made Man and Cawelti, Apostles of the Self-Made Man.
- <sup>122</sup> Taylor, the typesetter and enterprising individual, was occasionally compared to Benjamin Franklin. See Taylor's letter to Marie Hansen-Taylor, 5 February 1859, BTP, HL; see also Wermuth, Selected Letters, 150-151.
- <sup>123</sup> Longfellow to Taylor, 25 December 1846, File Cu-Lo to Taylor, Box 2, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>124</sup> Greeley, Recollections, 326.
- <sup>125</sup> Taylor, Views, 46, 88. My emphasis.
- <sup>126</sup> Quoted in Smyth, Bayard Taylor, 285-286.
- <sup>127</sup> Quoted in August J. Pahl, "Bayard Taylor in Germany," German Quarterly 18 (January/November 1945), 16.
- <sup>128</sup> Bayard Taylor, Eldorado, or, Adventures in the Path of Empire (New York: George P. Putnam, 1850), 69.
- <sup>129</sup> "Bayard Taylor's Journey to Central Africa," Putnam's Monthly Magazine of American Literature 4 (September 1854), 343.
- <sup>130</sup> Newark Advocate, 29 March 1854. Quoted in David Mead, Yankee Eloquence in the Middle West: The Ohio Lyceum, 1850-1870 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1951), 116.
- <sup>131</sup> Springfield [Ohio] News, 26 November 1860.
- <sup>132</sup> Conwell, The Life of Bayard Taylor, 5.

## Chapter 2

### Searching for Signs of Status: Culture and the Passage to Middle-Class Gentility

A careful reading of Taylor's Views reveals a contradictory text. Throughout the book, despite the display of republican and liberal ideological attitudes, the author projected an image of himself as a man of considerable cultural sophistication. He frequently described to the reader his contemplation of art and architecture. He talked of the books he read and poems he was writing. Nathaniel Parker Willis contributed to this double image. In the introduction Willis explained that Taylor was no ordinary republican laborer, but a "poet-mechanic." Both were eager to craft an image of Taylor as a man whose combination of taste and emotional sensitivity represented his inner virtue and natural superiority. This second theme in Views reflects the growing merger of status-striving and sentiment: the emerging importance of a new bourgeois notion linking status with the refinement of inner feeling rather than outward appearance.

Couched within the democratic celebration of his travel to Europe, the author occasionally displayed resentment for the lower class company he was forced to keep. On these occasions it was not their poverty that put him off, a quality he could hardly criticize, but their crude behavior and tastes. If one reads Views as a bildungsroman, or a story about the maturation of a young man, its hidden conceit was that the passage in years paralleled a transformation in his sentimental and aesthetic virtues. The resulting change was meant to signify a shift in Taylor's social status. By its end Taylor has grown out of the rural poverty of his youth into a man with experience and talents that would be admirable in the highest circles of American society.<sup>1</sup>

As we will see here Taylor's belief in the equation of sentiment and status took shape in the years before his voyage to Europe. Taylor's designs in the book flowed from a childhood education under the superintendence of his mother in the emerging culture of print which taught him to associate refinement and class. After 1837 when the family moved to West Chester he observed the evolving ideology of genteel sentiment among the town's prosperous elite. Like many prosperous, educated, and aspiring Americans he suffered from an acute sense of insecurity. Like them he felt anxious about his future and wondered about the legitimacy of his right to seek and hold a superior social position. For some, even for those who had attained a respectable economic station, there remained uncertainty and personal doubt about their status.

In the wake of these concerns there emerged a growing preoccupation with what Richard Bushman in his book The Refinement of America called gentility.<sup>2</sup> This involved concern for behavioral refinements like etiquette, moral delicacy, and an elevated appreciation of art, music, literature and poetry. These were in turn linked to a preoccupation with the sentiments: feeling that supposedly accompanied elevated aesthetic experience and behavior. For the new middle class, gentility and respect for the "high culture" of aristocratic society conferred upon them a sense of self-importance. It provided a basis for distinguishing themselves from others in the highly fluid social conditions of the day. Hoping to join them Taylor emulated their behavior.

Like them he drew inspiration from America's traditional elite whose values dominated the most respected portion of the print culture of the day. Suffering from their own fear of inferiority relative to their transatlantic brethren, and increasingly concerned about the encroachment at home of the commercial nouveau riche, pressed for the

recognition of gentility as a true measure of social merit. But the real source for this outlook came from abroad where the colonial gentry had found it. Consequently, in turn, the search for what Pierre Bourdieu has termed symbolic capital drew the bourgeoisie towards Europe.<sup>3</sup>

In Views, and indeed in much of his later writing, Taylor helped facilitate the overcoming of one of the critical sticking points within the emerging culture of gentility. The values of worldliness, hierarchy, and leisure surrounding this aristocratically inspired ideology stood in opposition to the otherworldly spiritualism, revolutionary republicanism, and practical stoicism of Protestant liberalism, valued by the same people. As the pursuit of refinement in Views intertwined with the hardy liberal-republican ethos that I first described, Taylor lent credibility to the emerging compromise between these opposing values. The polished elitism of aristocratic refinement was dimmed by the workman-like struggles and pious enjoinders that permeated the book. In this Taylor's writing was both a product of and contributor to the middle-class domestication of gentility already underway.

### **The Spread of Gentility**

Growing-up, Taylor had learned to connect refinement with status. In West Chester the middle class displayed their prosperity through acquiring fine material objects. The town was no backcountry village. A visitor to the town in the mid 1830s said, "[I] found more taste, talent and refinement in West Chester, in proportion to the number of inhabitants than in any town, without exception, I have visited."<sup>4</sup> In the previous decades the stately brick homes of the local middle class had moved back off the street and the land before them was ornamented with roses and shrubbery rather than

cabbages. The interiors were filled with fine furniture and a painting or two hung prominently upon the wall. Dinners were served on delicate China and their studies possessed several rows of books. The manufacturers, storekeepers, and lawyers wore frock coats, and the style of their wives' and daughters' dresses came from England and France. Yet what must have surprised a boy from Kennett Square the most when he moved to West Chester was the way refined people behaved. They showed a particular concern with etiquette, such as table manners or the appropriate time to blow their nose. It must have seemed strange and a bit frightening for a farm boy like Taylor whose relatively crude behavior made him stand out. At the Bolmar's Academy where the children of the town's affluent citizens studied, students considered Taylor an "awkward and rustic" country boy when he arrived.<sup>5</sup>

The fancy tastes of the West Chester bourgeoisie were an emulation of the older American gentry. The prosperous new middle-class citizens of West Chester sought to mimic customs of the country gentry who had dominated the social life of the region in earlier times. Prosperity now made it possible for them to show a heightened appreciation for expensive material goods, elevated concern for manners, and an emphasis upon discriminating ideas of taste. By as early as the 1780s, gentility "flecked without coloring," as one historian put it, the lives of a growing number of Americans.<sup>6</sup>

The culture of gentility had its roots in the European aristocracy. In the fifteenth century they began establishing codes of behavior intended to delineate new social and psychological boundaries. Manners were one such code. Manners acted as signals of membership in elite society because learning the correct behaviors for a given occasion required leisure and money. Thus these affectations defined exclusivity. In time the

civilizing process came to include more than courtesy, as aspects of feeling and thought also came under its organizing sway.<sup>7</sup>

What originated in the affluent and courtly circles of continental Europe spread to England in the seventeenth century. The island's rapid rise in affluence during this period initiated a scramble for codes to establish social status. To this end English society increasingly turned to the Continent. The elaborate culture of coding in England came to involve ideas of travel, and thus, in turn, the adoption of behaviors and tastes—such as etiquette, the use of foreign languages, preferences in artistic expression, and intellectual attitudes—borrowed from others. The sophisticated cultures of France and Italy were favored destinations of English travelers in search of symbolic capital.<sup>8</sup> In seventeenth century England social status partly depended upon one's ability to display social conventions that had been adopted from the continent.

Thus the Grand Tour was born. Young English aristocrats journeyed to the Continent to gain polish. They learned to eat with a fork, properly address others, appreciate music, artfully write letters, and appropriately entertain guests. The habit and expectations of civility, and the idea of the Grand Tour itself, were transplanted to America during the late colonial era. Colonial elites took gentility quite seriously. They were often descendent from relatively impoverished English gentry or worse. They were also keenly aware of their distance from the center of imperial power in London. Both made them sensitive to the need to appear as if they belonged.<sup>9</sup> Even several decades after the Revolution, Europeans like Tocqueville were astonished at how earnestly Americans insisted upon the observance of social form.

[The American gentleman] is like a man surrounded by traps: society is not a recreation for him, but a serious toil [...] I doubt whether there was ever a

provincial man of quality so punctilious in breeding as he is: he endeavors to attend to the slightest rules of etiquette and does not allow one of them to be waived towards himself; he is full of scruples and at the same time pretensions; he wishes to do enough, but fears to do too much, and as he does not very well know the limits of the other, he keeps up a haughty and embarrassed air of reserve.<sup>10</sup>

At about the time Tocqueville wrote these words, the concern for social forms had already begun to migrate to the emerging middle class. In time among them it took on even greater importance. They were, after all, one more step removed from possessing the status conferred upon aristocrats by right of birth. In addition, they lived in a fluid social environment. Social mobility made them attentive to cultural forms that might help solidify their position.

Nowhere was this impulse felt stronger than in towns like West Chester. The historian Richard Bushman argues that gentility's importance was larger in small communities than in great cities. Punctiliousness among the prosperous folk of towns compensated for their distance from the true culture centers of the nation. Evoking the cultural stature of others they raised themselves. As Harriet Beecher Stowe years later waggishly recalled:

Then, as now, even in the simple and severe Puritanical village, there was much incense burnt upon the alter of gentility—a deity somewhat corresponding to the unknown god [...] Paul found at Athens, and probably more universally worshipped in all the circles of this lower world than any other idol on record.<sup>11</sup>

Taylor quickly began to win the approval of the genteel set in West Chester. At school he proved less rustic than he had at first appeared. He was adept at composing amusing acrostics and soon sent poems to the local newspaper. He joined organizations dedicated to culture. These refined forms of play were the sort of behavior that set prominent citizens at ease because they showed his willingness to conform to an unstated hierarchy based on culture. That hierarchy affirmed their status at the top of the society,

thus conveying a sense of order particularly valued at the time because of the growing challenges to social order.

The manner of the Taylor family's arrival in West Chester, and the inability of their son to assume the father's occupation, is suggestive of how the new economy was disruptive to the older social order. The increase in mobility produced by these changes meant that towns like West Chester experienced enormous turnover in population as people traveled in search of better employment. Mobility placed pressure upon traditional sources of community order. All over the country as people left home to work in the emerging manufacturing and market sectors of the economy, the older lines of authority that had governed daily life declined. Independent of home and the authoritative structure of the patriarchal family, the coercive dynamics of community oversight, and institutions such as the church, many experienced a degree of freedom previously held in check by social pressures.

To some the change warranted concern. West Chester, like many of the larger urban centers, did in fact suffer bouts of hooliganism and even riots during this period.<sup>12</sup> Busy composing poetry, Taylor showed he preferred less disorderly pursuits, ones deferential to the tastes of the leading citizens. With his attendance at the Bolmer Academy, refined pursuits, and eagerness to improve himself, the young man won the respect of the town's leading citizens. It was an important achievement. Middle class fears surrounding horizontal mobility were exacerbated by vertical movement within society. To the new middle class the possibilities of self-improvement were central to their hopes. Cultural stewards of the old elite, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, identified self-culture as the virtue of the natural aristocracy. Demonstration of a desire for cultural

self-improvement served as a marker of status. The fluid nature of the society, however, made it increasingly difficult to delineate the boundaries between classes. As wealth replaced birth as the source of social power, the basic fabric of deference began to decay. One expression of the concern was the way middle-class Americans became preoccupied with fear of social interlopers, or confidence men and women.<sup>13</sup> It all added to the bourgeois anxiety over economic vulnerability. The impulse grew within the new middle class, in particular, to find a means of clearly asserting social status, policing the borders between those who did and did not belong.

For many the outward trappings of gentility were appealing because of the way they were perceived to harken back to older, and what was thought to be a more stable and peaceful time far removed from the uncertainty in which they lived. This nostalgic longing drew many respectable Americans to the idea of feudal Europe and promoted the popularity of the ballads, romances, and historical novels of Sir Walter Scott. Reading Rob Roy as a boy Taylor had become so fascinated with the Scottish countryside that while visiting it later he would call it “Scott-land.” In the past described by Scott there was a clear moral structure. The behavior of his heroes was marked by noble virtues and the outcome of his stories suggested that a higher organizing force was at work in the universe. In his medieval stories in particular readers were drawn to the description of a world bound by tradition and unambiguous social relations. Scott’s fiction impressed Taylor’s young mind so much that he imitated it. At fifteen Taylor filled notebooks with stories of chivalry and heroic action set in the Scottish highlands and the medieval past.<sup>14</sup>

Taylor nurtured thoughts of becoming a poet or writer himself. His drift in this direction had begun much earlier in his life and was undoubtedly rooted in the world of

print in which he had, with his mother's encouragement, immersed himself as a boy.

There he began to prize the value of "feeling" associated with artistic expression.

Sentiment, as it was called by Taylor's contemporaries, equated refined aesthetic appreciation, emotional sensitivity, and decorous behavior, with moral purity.

As a boy Taylor read popular magazines like Godey's Lady's Book and Graham's Magazine that contained saccharine tales linking feeling to Christian piety. These frequently centered round the lives of an ideal genteel woman. Removed from the marketplace and isolated to the domestic sphere, the women imagined in this fiction were vulnerable and innocent, linked to a higher moral order by their spiritual purity and capacity to feel. Their superior feelings were demonstrated through confessional journal writing. They kept albums or collection books through which they expressed their rarified tastes. And they read poetic and literary sentimental tales. Many women emulated these fiction characters. So did Taylor. Encouraged by his affectionate and protective mother Taylor read gift books: publications filled with poetry, platitudes, and the doe-eyed figures of the engraver John Sartain.<sup>15</sup> Through them he felt connected to a larger, but exclusive, world of feeling. He thought of his journal writing as a pursuit of self-perfection. "I am satisfied," he wrote in one diary, "that I cannot continue [writing] long without becoming a wiser, and perhaps better being."<sup>16</sup> Taylor kept a private commonplace book where he copied the writings of sentimental poets as Lydia Huntley Sigourney and others.

This equation of cultivation with spiritual quality also gained substance in Taylor's life due to his religious training. Taylor's parents were not members of the Society of Friends. They nevertheless raised their children according to Quaker beliefs.<sup>17</sup>

During the 1820s and 1830s evangelical Quakerism washed over West Chester. The religious revival in movement emphasized that salvation depended upon the need first to seek a direct relationship with God. In order to achieve salvation one needed to discover within oneself an “inner-light” and thus come to an emotional rather than rational experience of God. The transformation occurred through a spiritual rebirth or conversion. For some this inner relationship came to be equated with feeling, sentiment, and beauty.<sup>18</sup> Taylor’s mother taught her son to believe in the importance of inner light and quietism as the paths to personal salvation. But at the same time she appears to have been influenced by the urban evangelical English Quaker Joseph John Gurney, and concluded that the celebration of self-culture and sentiment was in concordance with her New Light beliefs that one’s spiritual nature would and should find worldly expression.<sup>19</sup> For her son, poetry and art became his path towards an inner-light connection with God. In the years to come he would pass through several of what could be called artistic rebirths or conversions, each, he believed, bringing him into a higher, purer union with his muse.

Sentiment unified aesthetic and moral values in Taylor’s relationship with his childhood sweetheart Mary Agnew. The image of Mary Agnew passed down to us is as an archetype of genteel womanhood. Grace Greenwood, the nom de plume of the popular sentimental writer Sarah J. Clarke, described her as “A dark-eyed young girl with the rose yet unblighted on cheek and lip, with soft, brown, wavy hair, which, when blown by the wind, looked like the hair often given to angels by the old masters, producing a sort of halo-like effect about a lovely head.”<sup>20</sup> Her transcendent spiritual purity was sadly expressed in her fragile physical health. Mary shared with Taylor a preoccupation with

higher feeling and love for artistic expression. She became for the young man a symbol of beauty, moral purity, and his personal muse (see appendix A for an idealized painting).

Some Americans were drawn into a deeper appreciation of aristocratic European culture because of their longing for a stable past, beauty, and untainted nobility of feeling. They linked the elevated sense of taste, observance of etiquette, appreciation for artistic refinement, and noblesse oblige, with social stability and spiritual purity.

Nathaniel Parker Willis wrote of his countryman's interest in the continent:

With desires and aspirations for the reverend and historically beautiful, forever unsatisfied at home, fed for years upon the splendid literature of all time, and the pompous history of the nations that have occupied and molded the earth [and yet separated from what they long for] by the essential spirit of society around them, the American mind is solicited by Europe with unimagined fascination.<sup>21</sup>

In the hope presumably of feel more “satisfied at home,” the bourgeoisie sought to appropriate the trappings of European elite culture as a means of prestige.

In the coming years gentility came to have a distinctive significance for bourgeois identity in several ways. On the surface, high culture polished the rough face of progress: the vulgar materialism, vicious ambition, and the spiritual uncertainties that came with the breakdown of traditions. Sentiment was a structure of feelings signifying the communally oriented emotions of sympathy, compassion, and identification that softened the harsher realities of the market society. Indeed, the eighteenth-century had nurtured the idea of sensibility in reaction to both the grim Hobbesian belief that man was primarily motivated by self-interest and the orthodox Calvinist insistence on human depravity. Once sentiment become the dominant aesthetic mode in America, ruling the pages of the mammoth weeklies, the shared terms of emotional experience it created reinforced the sense of unity elicited by print.

Yet the unity of feeling also implied an order or hierarchy of sentiment. Indeed the term sentiment did not have for them the same meaning of personal or interior emotion as understood today. Cultural sophistication and feeling became a measure of rank in a social order leveled by egalitarian values. Gentility promised to fill the void left in the decline of traditional authority. Sentiment could be the basis of both a bond and difference between people. In this sense sentiment had a public as well as private meaning: an elevated capacity to feel was a requisite of respectability, a sign of one's social and moral superiority. Sentiment was a pious version of taste. As a scholar of the American sentimental novel has observed:

[T]he process of determining whether or not one was blessed with this highly prized quality [sentiment] was not unlike the methods employed by Calvinists seeking for signs of their spiritual salvation. The accompanying symptoms were certainly often the same. Swoons, trances, visions, languishing, ecstasies, and a variety of emotional delirium tremens were all welcomed as evidences of "election."<sup>22</sup>

Of course sentiment could serve as a marker of station because like the attainment of other genteel forms it required time and effort that many of those of modest means were unable to allocate. In short, the refined tastes and elevated feelings associated with high culture were a de facto signifier of social rank.<sup>23</sup> In this it combined the liberal Protestant association between success and divine favor, with the secular assumption derived from the pervasive influence of Scottish Common Sense philosophy. Taste, Common Sense psychology argued, was an inborn faculty. Hence proficiency in high culture became a mark of "natural" superiority.<sup>24</sup>

An example in Taylor's life might help to clarify how this worked. The case of Mary reveals that from the capacity to feel, it was a short road to a belief in the moral virtue of sensitivity. Thus it was a distance quickly traveled by middling American eager

to unify high culture with Christian and republican morals. All of which naturally was taken as a sign of the superior nature of the feeling individual. In reverse, Taylor's love of Mary served, for him and others, as a sign of his superior merit. Just as Taylor believed it did in Mary, possession of sentiment acted within middle-class society as a mark of refinement and developed character.

Taylor it turns out was acutely aware of the value of gentility in social economy. As Taylor would later write, "the ability to converse fluently" about beauty, emotions, and the material or moral state of others was greatly admired by middle-class society and "taken by the community [...] as a sign of capacity to feel deeply on these subjects."<sup>25</sup> Whether Taylor gathered this bit of wisdom from observing the world around him or when he read the Earl of Chesterfield's letters in the extremely popular The Accomplished Gentleman cannot be known. In his diaries Isaac Mickles acknowledged the importance of Chesterfield to his understanding of how the development of culture might practically affect their opportunities in life.<sup>26</sup> And as any reader of the innumerable editions of Chesterfield's work would have learned, he said the best way to acquire such polish was to travel.

In a different way homes, furnishings, and clothing provided the material expression of gentility and link with things foreign. While the history of each is complex, people tended toward a preference for foreign styles. The historian Carl Bode explained, "In interior decorating as in architecture" Americans seemed "content to borrow from one European fashion after another."

Andrew Downing, having offered Greek, Gothic, and Italian houses to his public, further proposed that if money were available they be furnished in Grecian, French (ranging from Francis I down to the last of the Louis'), Elizabethan, Gothic, Romanesque, or even Flemish. Everything but American.<sup>27</sup>

The appeal of these foreign fashions and objects was at least partly based on the way they impressed others. After her marriage and move to South Carolina in the early 1850s Julia Dyson described in her journal the sense of admiration she felt walking into the home one of her husbands friends and seeing the “rare things from different parts of Europe” visited by them.<sup>28</sup> The values and behavior of the middle class were equally influenced by foreign examples. Etiquette manuals and aesthetic treatises were in substance, if not form, imported from abroad.

In a similar manner, while love of bourgeois Americans for Sir Walter Scott was a reflection of nostalgic longing for stability, it was also a sign of their growing emphasis upon art and literature as forms of cultural capital. In the same way Americans were drawn to material culture and behavior forms that symbolically showed status, they pursued the accumulation of European art and literature in their attempt to acquire distinction. Americans who were inclined towards the arts quite naturally turned their attention to Europe because their own country seemed bereft of the necessary institutions and of a highly evolved national culture of its own. As in the case of the pursuit of practical knowledge, Americans interested in becoming painters, sculptors, musicians, and writers traveled to Europe for training and inspiration.<sup>29</sup>

Growing up, Taylor learned to equate Europe with the high culture prized by gentility. “I cannot,” Taylor himself wrote, “disconnect my early longings for knowledge of the Old World from a still earlier passion for Art and Literature.” “[When] I determined to procure better opportunities for education [...] I hungrily read all European works of travel, and my imagination clothed foreign countries with a splendid atmosphere of poetry and art.”<sup>30</sup>

### **Culture as a Path to Prestige**

Taylor's pursuits provided a way for him to earn social prestige. Maturing at a moment when attitudes toward gentility were changing, Taylor saw a future for himself as a creator and advocate of culture. Up until at least the mid-nineteenth century, belief in gentility and the attendant idea of culture as a measure of social hierarchy faced a considerable challenge in American society. The Puritan/republican values of restraint, self-discipline, simplicity, and principles of liberal democracy cohabitated uncomfortably with the aristocratically inspired notion that taste and refinement amounted to a measure of social difference. Avid readers of foreign travel like Indianapolis businessman Calvin Fletcher emphasized the disciplinary nature of travel in keeping with his stern and highly practical republican tastes. He found its frequent association with refinement difficult to swallow. Part of what made travel literature "absorbingly interesting" for so many people was the way it brought this contradiction into focus. Americans traveling abroad, particularly in the early nineteenth century, bore with them a staunch adherence to the belief that they, and their nation, were defined by moral purity, republican virtue, and liberal principles. This was a belief forged in the fires of Puritan mission and the republicanism of the American Revolution. Both asserted that these values set America apart from the corruption and evil of feudal-aristocratic Europe. And yet in the mid-nineteenth century the journey to Europe was increasingly undertaken as part of a program to acquire the very cultural ornaments that flew in the face of these values. The journey, in short, raised troubling questions of identity.

In 1864 Henry T. Tuckerman devoted a book to the examination of how Europeans saw the United States. Inevitably it led him to summarize how America, in

turn, viewed the difference between themselves and Europe. “It has long been an accepted proposition,” he wrote, that the “moral significance of the United States in the family of nations, rests exclusively on a practical realization” of political and material “democracy.” In contrast, “Europe has represented the idea of culture and of society.”<sup>31</sup>

Though grounded in the millennialist expectations of colonists, belief in American virtue versus European corruption grew during the founding conflict with England. Republican distrust for the Old World refinement nourished early American nationalism. Thomas Jefferson captured the essence of the view when he thanked God “for the intervention of so wide an ocean” between Europe and ourselves so that the disease of aristocratic decadence would not contaminate the new nation.<sup>32</sup> European travelers during the early decades of the nineteenth century ridiculed the nation’s lack of refinements and thereby succeeded in intensifying this distrust of culture. Sensitive to the charge of cultural backwardness, early American apologists equated provincialism with patriotism. They argued the rejection of over-refinement showed fidelity to republican America.

Despite their pride in republican simplicity American elites recoiled from a reputation of parochialism. Benjamin Silliman, who readily admitted how much he had learned during his travels, nonetheless complained of the English perception of American crudeness as a “vague and incorrect notion [...] of our manners.”<sup>33</sup> His public exasperation was an example of what has been called the “war of words” between the United States and England during the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>34</sup> Captain Basil Hall’s Travels in North America in the Years 1827 and 1828, Fanny Trollope’s sarcastically titled Domestic Manners of the Americans and Charles Dickens’ American

Notes drew the ire of Americans because they depicted the United States as culturally backward. It was just this sort of lambasting that Tuckerman detailed in his America and Her Commentators.<sup>35</sup>

In reprisal American travelers focused on what they saw as England's many social and political defects in books with titles like Men and Manners in Great Britain: A Bone to Gnaw on for the Trollopes, Fidlers, &c. James Fenimore Cooper's umbrage was channeled into his Notions of America, Picked Up By a Traveling Bachelor published in 1828. In it Cooper sought to disabuse Europeans of their misunderstandings regarding the United States. Along the way he attacked aristocratic snobbery and the overvaluation of ornamental culture.<sup>36</sup>

The subject became a favorite on public lecture platforms. The Camden, New Jersey diarist Isaac Mickle attended a lecture on "The English Tourist in America" in August of 1842. Coming only a few months after the publication of Charles Dickens' blistering reports of his trip to the United States, it returned his criticism of the nation's backwardness by blasting England as the land of social injustice.<sup>37</sup> By the mid-1830s a broad spectrum of the American population attended lectures like the one Mickle described. Until the 1850s when professional speakers begin to dominate lecture circuit, most lectures were given by local lawyers, physicians, clergymen, and other educated members of the community.<sup>38</sup> The role of the middle class in shaping what one heard at the local lyceum was one reason why Carl Schurz felt that at the lecture hall "I saw what I might call the middle-class culture in the process of formation."<sup>39</sup>

These attacks on American society reinforced distrust of gentility. They encouraged Americans to reject out-of-hand what they were accused of lacking. So

closely linked was American nationalism to the republican distrust of gentility that interest in foreign culture became suspicious. Many gravely dismissed it as “denationalizing.”<sup>40</sup> Common were imprecations that echoed the observation Jefferson made nearly a half century before: “traveling makes men wiser but less happy.” Their new “affections,” he explained, “cannot be gratified when they return home.”<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, the negative connection between gentility and American identity continued to be a central motif in republican and religiously inspired jeremiads through the nineteenth century. Intellectuals, especially in the later antebellum period, though torn by their admiration for European cultural achievements, nonetheless held dearly to the parochial Americanism that seemed to offer a sense of self through a secure national identity. They saw dependence upon European manners and thought as a form of cultural imperialism, oppressing the development of the new nation’s individualism. It was the same tired lament that led those at the time of the Revolution to compose doggerel like “Literary Importation”:

Can we never be thought to have learning or grace  
Unless it be brought from that damnable place  
Where tyranny reigns with her impudent face?<sup>42</sup>

Years later Emerson famously asserted in a passage, studied by the young Taylor, that the urge to learn about foreign life reflected intellectual immaturity.

And yet while Americans harbored republican suspicion of European cultural refinement, one consequence of the fear regarding its importation was to spur its development at home. “It is,” Emerson said, “for want of self-culture that the superstition of traveling, whose idols are Italy, England, Egypt, retains its fascination for all educated Americans.”<sup>43</sup> He proposed that the nation become more “self-reliant.”

Americans should abandon their tendency to imitate Europe in matters of higher culture and create their own. Cooper called the need for home grown American culture: “mental emancipation.”<sup>44</sup>

The subject was another major theme in public lectures. Dickens’ criticism of the United States in the summer of 1842 spurred an avalanche of such talks. Avid readers of English novels in general, Americans deeply revered Dickens. Because he sold so well, publishers used special curriers to get pirated editions of his works before their competition. As a result Dickens’ comments stung. On one hand he intensified the feeling of national embarrassment. Hurt by the criticism from a writer they dearly loved, many wished the nation would develop its own writers, men and women who would not presumably stab it in the back. Embarrassments like these, in short, gave the call for self-culture widespread nationalistic appeal. Educated young men like Taylor began to imagine the pursuit of art and literature was as much a patriotic duty as the acquisition of practical knowledge. The cultivation of feeling was a way of attaining prestige because it served patriotic ends.

By the late 1830s Taylor’s poetic imitations had evolved into original composition in verse and fiction. These sentimental experiments—with titles like “The Beauty of Love”—filled several notebooks. That Taylor already considered these efforts as a kind of social performance is reflected in his assumption of an authorial persona. One of the volumes was titled “The Miscellaneous Productions of Bayard Taylor [...] who styles himself Julius.”<sup>45</sup> While his earliest publications were letters of local travel, he began in the early 1840s to send poems to newspapers. During Dickens’ visit Taylor wrote the author asking for his autograph.

[I]t wasn't without feelings of ambition that I looked upon [the autograph], that he, once a humble clerk, had risen to be the guest of a mighty nation. So I, a humble pedagogue, might by unremitting and arduous intellect and moral exertion, become a light, a star among the names of my country. May it be.<sup>46</sup>

As the passage reveals, Taylor's interest in writing and hence cultural performance was not simply a matter of patriotic, sentimental, and spiritual impulses. For him becoming an author or poet had practical advantages. By the 1840s within segments of the American population gentility was emerging, in and of itself, as a mechanism of social advancement. As the middle class adopted symbols of status within a system of cultural hierarchy, facility with manners, art and literature, emerged as valuable commodities in the interpersonal politics of the market economy.

This might be seen best in the place where self-culture found its widest expression: the growing popularity of educational associations. In towns and cities throughout the country Mercantile Libraries, Lyceums, Literary Societies, Young Men's Associations, and Mechanics Institutes sprang into existence. Members were comprised predominantly of young men of the emerging new commercial classes. Store clerks, merchants, salesmen, and shopkeepers were commonly members of these associations. Young male arrivals to the city gathered and created networks of support at the weekly meetings. As a young teenager Taylor joined several such organizations. In addition to his visits to the Lyceums, Taylor became a member of the Kennett Square "Literary Circle." His journals and letters from these years reveal a deep involvement in the local Debate Society's activities and much time spent preparing for literary meetings. Later he was one of the organizing members of the Unionville Academy debate society.<sup>47</sup>

At these educational associations, practical and technical learning was coupled with the development of skills such as debating and oration. The journals of young men

like Taylor and Isaac Mickle described listening to and critiquing the skills of other members.<sup>48</sup> At the same time William E. Channing, Emerson, and other vocal advocates of the self-culture movement emphasized the importance of cultural refinement. And indeed genteel pursuits became a central part of association and lyceum activities. In December of 1838, barely thirteen, Taylor gave his first public address before the Literary Circle: his topic, “The Art of Painting and Music.”

The ability to discuss history and art intelligently won the esteem of peers and the audience of the community’s social and business leaders. In Philadelphia Matthias Shirk Weaver, a struggling illustrator recently transplanted from Ohio recognized in his diaries how important speaking before the established men who belonged to the lyceum was for his business opportunities.<sup>49</sup> Taylor’s journals describe patiently listening for the third time to a lecture on classical education given by a local doctor. It was perhaps this sort of forbearance as well as his energetic participation that brought about his election to the role of secretary in 1842 of the West Chester Lyceum. As he explained in his diary the voting members were the town’s leading doctors, ministers, merchants, lawyers and manufacturers. He received gifts of books and praise from some of these civic leaders. Those who wanted to succeed joined these organizations. As one historian explained, members were “aspiring and ambitious, personally, socially, and culturally.”<sup>50</sup>

The subject and content of Taylor’s very first presentation before one of these organizations, his lecture on art and music, reveals a fundamental irony of the self-culture movement: while it evolved in part as a way of achieving “emancipation” from Europe and blunting the danger of ornamental culture, it ended by increasing interest in Europe. Taylor’s lecture consisted mostly of a talk about developments taking place in Italy,

France, Germany and England. Afterward association members congratulated him upon his sophistication at such a young age.<sup>51</sup> For all of his republican sentiments, Calvin Fletcher recognized the value of this sort of demonstration and when his sons spoke before the local lyceum that “so afraid was I of a failure that it took my appetite away.”<sup>52</sup>

As gentility gained value in the social marketplace, Old World cultural sophistication drew Americans reluctantly to gaze over the seas with secret envy. While many alluded grimly to the dangers of ornamental knowledge and foreign influence, they simultaneously looked abroad for practical knowledge and refinements like art and literature.<sup>53</sup> Emerson and Cooper were examples of the growing, fascination among elite Americans with the manners and tastes. Cooper’s 1838 novel Home as Found described the return after a long absence abroad of an American who was immediately dismayed at the comparative cultural backwardness he encountered.<sup>54</sup> Prominent citizens such as Amos Bronson Alcott and Horace Bushnell expounded upon the need to educate the masses in culture as well as practical matters.<sup>55</sup>

While many prominent Americans fretted about the danger of gentility to America, they also clung to refinement in mind and manners. In an egalitarian society that threatened the social status of elites did not want to relinquish the advantages of their social position. The privileged settled upon the assertion that cultural attainment reflected natural superiority. They buttressed this claim by asserting that the appreciation of culture was patriotic. They insisted that improvements in mind and manners would be good for the nation as a whole. The 1837 “Report on Elementary Instruction in Europe” written by the Ohio educator Calvin Stowe contained an alarming assessment regarding

the neglect of culture and personal refinement.<sup>56</sup> As gentility became more important to the emerging middle class these views by elites gained credence.

As a result by the early 1830s, despite the continuing tension between republicanism and refinement, a shift can be detected in public discourse. The drumbeat of criticism leveled at the Old World was matched by a tone of appreciation. To some extent, the longstanding moral disdain for Europe was paired with admiration.<sup>57</sup> Irving's Sketch Book led the way. He evoked nostalgic sentiments for the ordered nature of English society and emphasized importance of culture to that stability. Invoking aesthetic and literary bonds between his readers and England he fostered a sense of connection. His audience, as I have emphasized, had grown-up reading English literature and poetry and he reminded them of that world. Julia Dyson gives a typical example of the way the link in print culture shaped attitudes towards England. In her diary she wrote, "Shall I ever visit that land, rendered immortal by arms, by art, and song? In imagination I pay my visits daily[.]"<sup>58</sup> Attitudes toward the continent also warmed. Here again cultural elites like Irving, Longfellow and Cooper pushed a gentler, more sentimental, vision of the Old World.

Irving's surrogate persona, Geoffrey Crayon, whose identity was explicitly connected to his gentility by his title's reference to him as a gentleman, intertwined learning with manners. The misty emphasis upon the poetics of etiquette and nature acted to de-politicize gentility. That made it much easier for Irving to then advise: "we are a young people, necessarily an imitative one, and must take our examples and models, in a great degree, from the existing nations of Europe."<sup>59</sup>

However, there was still considerable republican hostility and moral disapproval of the Old World. In December of 1840 Isaac Mickle attended a lecture on “Fine Arts” in which the speaker lauded the virtue of literature, art, architecture and manners. To compensate for this inherently favorable depiction of refinement he used the accusation of materialism to level a republican-style rebuke of European society and its American imitators.<sup>60</sup> The celebration of culture, let alone the approval of Europe, always seemed to involve a delicate balance between applause and disapproval. It was one thing for Irving to dare to suggest that the United States in its pursuits of culture might benefit by looking across the Atlantic; it was quite another for a young man like Taylor to say it. In his lecture “America” which he delivered in 1843, Taylor walked a fine line between the praise of poetry, literature and painting and the patriotic need to make Europe pay for some imagined sin. He cloaked the call for cultural improvement behind the solidly republican demand for the expansion in education and the assertion that the future was bright for art and literature in the United States.

Cooper was one of the few, along with Irving, who could declare the nation’s need to recognize its cultural inferiority to Europe. Cooper was not a patrician stylist in the mode of Irving and his approach to the subject was more direct and confrontational. He followed his Notions of the Americans with the five-book “Gleaning” series of European travel that attempted this time to educate his countrymen about the advantages of Old World culture. He wanted them to see that because “in America everything is so much reduced to the standard of the useful that little of the graceful has yet been produced.” The strident anti-European and anti-genteel attitudes of his fellow countrymen angered Cooper. In America, he acerbically declared:

One can surely smoke cigars, drink Congress water, discuss party politics and fancy himself a statesman, whittle, clean his nails in company and never out of it, swear things are good enough for him without having known any other state of society, squander dollars on discomfort and refuse cents to elegance and convenience, because he knows no better, and call the obliquity of taste patriotism.<sup>61</sup>

Cooper's abuse of his countrymen came from his own uneasiness at the radical potential of the lack of class boundaries within the nation. Earlier in his career, of course, he had wrestled with the democratic, but also the potential for social chaos, in his writings about the frontier. When Cooper lived in Europe during the mid-1820s and 1830s he depicted a world diametrically opposite the American wilderness. He valued the social and cultural sophistication he found there and admired the stability it brought. His earlier writings had sought a way to mesh the superior qualities of each: to balance the democratic and anarchical with order and civilization.

In expression of this goal, Cooper sought repeatedly to integrate his frontier hero back into society. Cooper paired his wilderness hero with partners whose qualities made it possible to combine the virtues of nature with those of civilization. In the first of the Leatherstocking novels, The Pioneers, this narrative device was a character named Oliver Effingham. Effingham, though a worthy companion to Leatherstocking in the forest, was also an English gentleman. His manners, speech, taste, and education limited the democratic and anarchical potential of the frontier by reaffirming the legitimacy of the values that determined social merit. Significantly, the qualities that elevated Effingham above his partner were not the product of democracy but of aristocracy. Cooper revisited the theme in numerous fictional characters as he tried to imagine this union.<sup>62</sup>

It will become evident later on in this study that Taylor, in his adventures to Africa and Asia, was trying at some level to enact the union between civilization and

savagery that Cooper struggled to achieve in his frontier novels. Ironically, however, the most effective melding of values of restraint and simplicity with gentility was achieved through the growing importance of “feeling.”

Sentiment appealed to the emerging middle class because of the way it brought the pursuit refinement into accord with the values of simplicity, restraint and piety. With the introduction of sentiment, emotion became the focal point of genteel enterprise rather than material objects, or the seemingly arbitrary and artificial rules of etiquette. Proper manners were increasingly seen as the inevitable result of one’s natural feelings. This proved less abrasive to puritan and republican values, because, if one could rely upon the quality of sincerity, nothing (it was believed) could be simpler or more honest, and thus true, than feeling. On one hand this emphasis upon feeling naturalized what were in fact arbitrary standards of behavior. Taste, it was argued, came naturally to good people. It was not affectation. But most important of all, it made refinement—as a sincere expression of one’s elevated nature—a reflection of the purity of the soul. Many, like Taylor saw their cultivated endeavors, such as the poetry he began to write, as a reflection of their elevated spiritual nature.

### **Fashioning a Spiritual Aristocracy**

Taylor’s cultured pursuits signaled he belonged to a “spiritual aristocracy.” The claim in the mid-nineteenth century that refinement of behavior and feeling equaled social station was underwritten by two ideological assertions. First, that sentiment was the same as piety and a sign of God’s favor. The second justification flowed from the belief, originating among the Scottish Common Sense Philosophers, that humans possessed a universal natural moral sense. The individual’s intuitive response—the

feeling or sentiment they experienced—to the beautiful and good was a measure of their innate character.

Travel writing served as an important medium for the evolution of these beliefs into a viable middle-class ideology of status. Travel did this because the subject of the genre placed an emphasis upon private experience, and moved the focus of gentility from a preoccupation with artificial ornaments like manners, to feeling. Thus sentimental travel played an important role in making gentility, and its implicit theory of cultural hierarchy, more palatable to middle-class audiences. For middle-class Americans uneasy about the genteel enterprise, sentimental travel reframed the experience of the Grand Tour from the accumulation of ornamental culture to an expression of pious feeling.

Sitting quietly in his upstairs room on the family farm reading Benjamin Silliman's A Journal of Travels in England, Holland, and Scotland, Taylor experienced more than a book about the study of science abroad. It was also an American Grand Tour narrative that linked elevated taste with moral weight. During his years abroad Silliman traveled widely, visited major cultural and historical sites and rubbed elbows with prominent members of English society. He implied that the resulting refinement of sentiments made him more genteel and thus a better moral agent.

In the next few decades, thanks in part to its popularization by those like Silliman and the fiction of Irving, the number of books published in which Americans traveled to Europe with the objective of attaining culture and performing the experience of sentiment associated with gentility greatly increased. The proliferation of the grand tour narrative coincided with the growth in tourism. Between the 1820s and 1840s roughly five thousand Americans were making the arduous Atlantic passage a year. Steamship

service, taking fourteen days, had become more common. By the 1850s the new screw-propelled Cunard and Collins liners had cut this time to as little as nine days, and, with the proportional decline in fares, the number of annual travelers rose to between twenty-five and thirty thousand. The new travelers turned to Taylor and other cosmopolitans for guidance. In turn he and others helped set the stage for an even greater post-Civil War expansion in tourism. Pent up for four years, eager to escape the dark business of the war, encouraged by growing affluence, after 1865 Americans flocked to Europe. Middle-class families were increasingly finding the pleasure of travel within their means. In the 1870s the ten thousand ton liners cut travel time to seven days, encouraging an average of sixty thousand Americans to visit the Old World each year.<sup>63</sup>

Improvements in transportation technologies were accompanied by the emergence of business and institutional developments that facilitated the tourist experience. To ease their ignorance of place, the early travelers had employed local couriers or a valet de place but hiring a good one was one of the major trials in overseas travel. In the early 1850s the first tourist agency, Thomas Cook & Sons, came into existence. Over the next half-century Cook and others eased the process by fixing fare rates, sponsoring tour groups, beginning the use of travel coupons and checks, and helping establish better and more dependable tourist infrastructures. In the early 1870s Cook had opened American offices.<sup>64</sup> By then the Atlantic Monthly had reported that “to visit Europe is one of the understood requirements of our conventional gentility.”<sup>65</sup>

The objectives of both travelers and the budding tourist industry meant that the Grand Tour became increasingly formulaic. Deemed the model of cultural sophistication many were eager to duplicate it. American middle-class tourists patterned their itinerary

upon the books they had read. The litany of sites visited by travelers came to be called the “beaten path.” In early 1844 as Taylor scrambled to finance the journey and devise his strategy of low cost travel, he prepared an itinerary the aims of which departed significantly from the themes that dominated discussion in the last chapter: republican search for practical education, learned self-reliance, and fortification of moral virtue by self-denial. His reading of Silliman, Irving and Cooper’s travels, among many others, helped establish an itinerary that despite the limits of his budget made his experience parallel as closely as possible the genteel aims of the traditional Grand Tour.

Landing in Liverpool on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July 1844 Taylor proceeded to Northern Ireland and into Scotland where he visited Glasgow, Edinburgh and cities of northern England. By the end of August he was in London from whence he crossed the channel. Here Taylor’s plans to study took him off the traditional path of most tourists or Parisian-bound medical students. Instead of heading into France he traveled to Belgium and then south to Cologne, along the Rhine, to Heidelberg. But the route was hardly off the beaten track. Since the 1830s the pursuit of education had made the visit to Germany a fairly common Grand Tour alternative. Heidelberg proved too expensive for Taylor’s meager purse, so instead he spent the winter in Frankfurt where he studied German. In the spring he set out on his walking tour of central Europe visiting Leipzig, Dresden, Prague, Vienna, Salzburg, and Stuttgart. In August of 1845 he left Frankfurt again for Italy by way of Zurich and Lucerne. Passing through Milan, Genoa, and Pisa he was now back on the typical tourist itinerary. He stayed in Florence for several months where again he made the pretense of education by practicing his Italian before visiting Rome at the beginning of 1846. Out of money he headed home via Marseilles, a five week stay in

Paris, and a long delay in London. In everything but the mode of travel, and tightened budget, it was a fairly typical itinerary.

The conventionality of Taylor's trip becomes more evident when one examines the things he focused his attention upon when traveling. Under the influence of the eighteenth-century cult of sentiment and landscape aesthetics the Grand Tour itinerary expanded to incorporate natural wonders, rural scenes, and historical sites. During the eighteenth century moral and aesthetic theorists like Edmund Burke had evolved a connection between the topography of visual experience and emotions.<sup>66</sup> In the last quarter of the eighteenth century William Gilpin instructed travelers in the proper approach and emotional response to various increasingly familiar scenes.<sup>67</sup> In time his repertoire came to include urban scenes as well: the sooty skyline of industrial Manchester, London's squalid streets, and the dark warren-like alleys of Paris. By early in the nineteenth century, prisons, insane asylums, factory floors, and sites of natural and man-made disaster were a common part of the American tourist's destinations. The experience of each became accompanied by a standard set of emotional responses established by aesthetic and moral theorists, and by the weight of the precedent set in earlier travel narratives. Taylor had been exposed to all of these in the varied and extensive travel reading he ingested in the early 1840s.

These emotional responses were thought to suggest something about the individual. For instance Gilpin believed that the feelings one experienced could reveal the higher creative power of the individual. He linked imaginative zest to the idea of attaining aesthetic pleasure from the odd or irregular, a quality he termed the picturesque.

But the thrust of this genteel ideology of sentiment was the linkage of piety to feeling. Influential philosophers and aesthetic theorists argued that these emotional responses reflected specific moral qualities in the individual. For instance, Burke argued that the experience of trembling apprehension before signs of nature's ominous, convulsive power—what he called the sublime—indicated spiritual depth. In contrast, he said, beauty produced tranquility in the eye of a refined observer. Hence the recognition of beauty was a sign of the viewer's refinement. But of course, beauty was good—thus one's awareness of beauty indicated the state of one's soul.<sup>68</sup>

Others made similar arguments. According to the Earl of Shaftsbury, for instance, the feeling of pleasure at seeing something beautiful was analogous to virtue.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, antipathy and aversion at the sight of injustice, said Shaftsbury, signaled a true capacity for the apprehension of right and wrong.<sup>70</sup> Adam Smith contended that sympathetic torments felt by observers upon a scene of suffering indicated their moral substance.<sup>71</sup>

These arguments equate sentiment with morality. They also suggested that the varied experience of travel exposed this superior nature of the observer. By the late eighteenth century, travel writing had evolved into an opportunity for emotional performance that signified status. Through the influence of popular English travel writers and romantics, this linkage of seeing and feeling to an elevated state of moral sensitivity had an enormous impact on the way many Americans experienced landscape and foreign scenes. It was evident in the early American popularizers of travel to Europe like Irving and Cooper. By the early 1840s the extent to which the conventions of sentimental travel

narratives had invested foreign scenes with feeling and spiritual significance can be seen in this passage from Catherine Sedgwick's Letters from Abroad to Kindred at Home:

We have heard of the Alps all our lives. We have read descriptions of them in manuscripts and print, in prose and poetry; we knew, their measurement; we have seen sketches, and paintings, and models of them; and yet, I think, if we had looked into the planet Jupiter, we could scarcely have felt a stronger emotion of surprise. In truth, up, up, where they hung and shone, they seemed to belong to heaven rather than earth; and yet, such is the mystery of the spirit's kindred with the effulgent beauty of God's works, that they seemed: A part of me and my soul, as I of them.

They "seemed to belong to heaven rather than earth," Sedgwick wrote, illustrating the conflation of emotionally laden landscape with spiritual transcendence. But her description also suggested her elevated nature, for the mountains that elicited the feelings seemed, she said, "a part of me and my soul," thus equating her emotional response to nature with her spiritual apprehension of God.<sup>72</sup>

Taylor was one of the many who read Sedgwick's soothing words in the mid-1840s. What gave this ideology of sentiment traction among educated Americans was the diffuse pantheistic impulse common to the liberal protestant religiosity of the day: an inheritance from the enlightened Unitarian and Congregational theologies that dominated the beliefs of northern elites in previous generations.<sup>73</sup>

Another author in whose poetry, fiction and travel writing this liberal protestant pantheism rose to new heights was the onetime schoolmarm Lydia H. Sigourney. By the late 1830s when Sigourney edited the annual Religious Souvenir and was a contributing editor to Godey's Lady Book, Taylor had become so thoroughly taken with the sentimental mode of her style and he imitated it in his private journals. Arguably the most popular American poet of the period, Sigourney's contributions were widely sought by magazines, weeklies, and Gift Book publishers. Her novels, short stories, and essays

had enormous sales. Like Sedgwick she also wrote didactic and juvenile pieces such as the Evening Readings in History on ancient and scriptural lands. In this and her other works foreign settings were a common device for the communication of pious moral sentiments. Historic sites and natural wonders were hallowed with suggestions of God's presence now and in the past.

Sigourney's writing had an important impact on middle-class readers, linking sentiment with a wide range of potential travel destinations. In 1842 Sigourney published her best seller Pleasant Memories of Pleasant Lands. She described English asylums, hospitals, and prisons to show that the connective link between the private self and civil society were the sentiments of compassion, sympathy, and benevolence. Here she was using foreign landscapes as proof of the connecting line between individual perfection, the creation of a truly Christian society, and the importance of proper sentiment in achieving both. Social aspirants flocked to Europe to prove to themselves and others through their emotional response to topoi of the Grand Tour genre, that they were deserving of the position they had assumed in society. The equation of sentiment with piety underwrote this claim to status.<sup>74</sup>

### **The Formulization and Performance of Sentimental Travel**

This sentimental ideology of travel appealed to many in the diverse new middle class. School mistresses like Emma Willard scurried about England and France in search of entry into the homes of literary figures and in emulation of their beloved Geoffrey Crayon.<sup>75</sup> When the Nantucket, Massachusetts diarist Marie Mitchell had finally saved enough by working at the Athenaeum to go to Europe in 1857 her plan was "to follow in the footsteps of Newton, Shakespeare, Milton, and Johnson."<sup>76</sup> In 1845 nearly 500

Americans signed their name to the visitors' book at Abbotsford, Scott's home.<sup>77</sup>

Clergymen like Nathaniel Sheldon Wheaton took leisurely, if sometimes not overly thoughtful, visits to famous historical sites.<sup>78</sup> The more practically-minded, like inventor Zachariah Allen, preferred to visit the industrializing cities, and observe the sorts of manufacturing wonders that had interested Silliman.<sup>79</sup> The scientist Jacob Green visited universities in England, France and Switzerland.<sup>80</sup>

In Views Taylor followed the already well-worn path of the genteel travel narrative. In England he made his way like Irving to the home of Scott as well as the birthplaces of Burns and Shakespeare. At Westminster Abbey he genuflected before the bones of Spenser and the "sublime countenance of Milton" in the same manner as Cooper. In Vienna he listened to Strauss perform and visited the tomb of Beethoven. In Leipzig and Dresden he spent hours carefully examining the city's art collections. Italy brought this emphasis upon high culture to a fevered pitch. He gloried in the historical associations around him. In Florence, the subject of his longest letters, he wove his way through the streets in search of sites hallowed by history and art. And of course he spent weeks in the galleries of Florence and Rome.

Taylor's childhood fascination with the travel writings of Irving, Longfellow, and Willis, followed by his emulation of their actual travels, exposed the way his expectations for the foreign were mediated by the textual designs of others. It was the same for most Americans. Commonly travel books were used, especially in the first half of the century, as literal guides. As early as 1817 the young Irving used The Lady of the Lake as his guidebook. Irving's own works were reverentially so treated, as were those of Longfellow, whose Hyperion conveniently served as a guide for those traveling in

Germany. As we shall see in the next chapter Taylor also carried with him Byron's Childe Harold, as a guide to geographies of both land and heart. The works of Cooper, Hawthorne, and James were in their turn used in similar fashion. The practice of using literary travel narratives as guides reflects the appropriative function of travel. Following the experiences described by distinguished literary personages conveyed a partnership between author and reader in which the latter assumed the cultural distinction of the former.<sup>81</sup>

Taylor's own writings were used this way. The businessman Edward Lowe Temple offers another example of how his experience of the world was shaped by what he had read. Late in life when he was finally able to travel Temple described how his dream of visiting Europe dated back to the "days of Bayard Taylor more than a generation ago." But Temple used other authors as well. His itinerary was formulated after consultation with "books of travel, poetry, and history, from Childe Harold's Pilgrimage to Curtis Guild's and William Winter's."<sup>82</sup>

The use of texts like this encouraged the formalization of the Grand Tour experience. The growth of the tourist industry also accelerated the process. By the second and third decade of the century guides had taken on more evidently commercial form. Encouraged by the growing number of travelers and their demand for information authors produced what today would be recognized as an actual guide book.

On his journey in 1844 Taylor had made use of the first published American guide.<sup>83</sup> But the book had begun to shape his travels long before the actual journey. "In my fifteenth year," Taylor later wrote, "a little book entitled The Tourist in Europe, written by Mr. George P. Putnam, fell into my hands." Taylor used the "programmes

[sic] of several European tours” as “a basis whereon to construct my own plans” for travel. Putnam’s reading recommendations shaped his educational program in the early 1840s. It gave practical tips for how the average man could manage to see what he termed “the long dreamed of attractions of the Old World.”<sup>84</sup> Synthesizing the travel literature of the day, Putnam’s attempted to organize the travelers’ experiences so that they could maximize what they learned from the trip. Referring to a number of authors, Putnam details the types of knowledge that the journey should provide. Reading the book over and over again, Taylor integrated its suggestions into his private studies. As one of his contemporaries explained:

The boy appears to have studied that book with the greatest and most persevering zeal. He used it for a plan of reading, and taking it by course, borrowed books relating to the places mentioned by Mr. Putnam until one by one he had learned the history, occupation, literary achievements, and habits of every city or town of note in the whole of Europe.<sup>85</sup>

Taylor, like others, was interested in recreating, as cost effectively as possible, the experiences described by other authors. Later these aids allowed tourists to experience the Grand Tour but do so in the form of “a happy little dash” described in 1861 by Edward Everett Hale in his Ninety Days’ Worth of Europe. The guides also made it easier to do it all on what Moses Sweetser referred to in 1872 as Europe for \$2 Dollars a Day.<sup>86</sup> Thomas Cook’s innovation extended the formulization and ease of the Grand Tour. By the late 1850s Americans could forgo the vagaries of independent travel by following Cook’s set itineraries and do it at a set cost.

The repetition of itinerary was critical to the continual reinforcement of the symbolic value of the sites visited. The importance of tourist destinations depended upon their recognition by the public as a place of significance. These associations needed to be

continually reinforced for them to retain their importance and thus their power to accord merit upon visitors.<sup>87</sup>

Honorific appropriation and literal reenactment of these texts also sheds light upon the underlying performativity of such experience. Taylor and other authors of travel narratives provided models showing not only how to gain such experiences but also how best to perform them. If Taylor's travels were geared to expose him to as much high culture as he could manage under the constraints of his pocketbook, the letters he published appeared eager to advertise how much he had succeeded. He prominently discussed his friendship with the brother of Nathaniel Parker Willis. He told the reader he listened to Willis play Mendelssohn and saw the composer in a crowd. Elsewhere he writes about his poetry and the way he sketched the Forum. His accomplishment of reading Goethe is duly recorded. At Florence he lingered in the shadow of the Duomo, pondering its sublimity. He explained how he introduced himself to the famed American sculptor Hiram Powers and how he was accepted into the expatriate circle in Florence. It was there, we learn, that he showed his poetry to the approval of the fashionable Fanny Trollope.

Eager to display the symbolic capital acquired through a visit to Europe, thousands of Americans produced travel texts. Nearly seven hundred books of travel were published in America prior to the Civil War. Old World Memories written by Edward Lowe Temple, the tourist who we learned was influenced by Taylor and other literary writers, was one of the roughly 1,300 travel narratives written between 1865 and 1900. Many more wrote letters published in local newspapers.<sup>88</sup>

Writing about travel gave authors a doubly effective way of acquiring the reputation of cultivation: it both publicized their tour and demonstrated the sophistication associated with authorship. The latter task was made easy because of the way the travel writing genre did not require a great deal of creativity. Nonetheless authorship, even in the most modest of proportions, was a powerful symbol within bourgeois society. Print was an important link between the various groups separated by economics, religion, education and geography. Reading was central to the growing interior, private world of bourgeois individuality. At the same time reading integrated the individual into the larger imagined community of bourgeois identity. Writing, particularly about the inner experience that occasioned travel, acted as a public expression of one's inner grace.

The teleology of travel narratives affirmed their function as performance. Travel narratives began and ended at home. Journeys for the most part were circular; their destination the place from which one left. Even on the most private of stages, in letters and diaries written to family and friends, authors spread an image of their own cultural accomplishment. In some circles by mid-century this sort of performance of worldliness rivaled parochial simplicity as a sign of piety and thus status. By 1867 The Atlantic Monthly noted simply, "The old men, whose boast it was that their lives had been spent within a radius of twenty or thirty miles, are going unhonored into their graves."<sup>89</sup>

### **The Theatricality of Sentiment**

The processes of formulization and performance described above suggest an important fact behind the culture of sentiment: while the notion of sentiment reflected an expanding sense of inner spiritual life it also served an important social function of linking culture, piety, and self-worth with status. Not infrequently the interior experience

was overridden by a concern for the outward performance of sentiment; the appearance of cultivated feeling became the objective.

The most common way of using the symbolic capital acquired by travel occurred at the level of interpersonal interactions. A scene from Taylor boyhood offers a good example. Walking the streets of West Chester on July 4<sup>th</sup> 1842, Taylor happened upon Mary Agnew, the object of his secret affections. Eager to show his feathers he led her into a conversation “on some literary subjects and Morris’s Travels, Egypt, Greece, etc.,” he confessed to his friend John Phillips. But it was Taylor who was impressed.

I perceived by the instant brightening up of her countenance, the light of mind visibly expressed, that she had the same admiration as myself for those venerable climes, the same reverence for their former grandeur and sorrow for their present degradation, that she admired their history and loved to muse upon their traditions that linger around their names, connecting them in our hearts that is alive to all that is grand or sublime in men and nature.

Mary’s sentimental performance made Taylor feel he had looked straight into the girl’s inner soul. Her genuine reaction, the “light of mind visibly expressed,” revealed to Taylor her higher quality, something the ideology of gentility linked to both her piety and her status as a member of the natural aristocracy. The mix was powerfully alluring. She had won his heart, he wrote, with her display of feeling: her “appreciation” and “admiration” for ruins, the sensitivity to conjure from these fleeting images a “reverence” for their grandeur, and a “sorrow” at the sight of human failing.<sup>90</sup>

In his fiction Taylor would later self-consciously play upon how in an interpersonal exchange the reaction of a character to exotic imagery conveyed individual merit. In this exchange between the female protagonist of his novel Hannah Thurston and her worldly suitor Maxwell Woodbury, Taylor used her emotional reaction to images of India in a book to convey her inner spirit.

Taking a large portfolio from its rack, he opened it on the table, under a swing lamp. There were views of Indian scenery. [...] The glimpses she caught, as he turned the leaves, took away her breath with sudden delight. // At last he found the plate he was seeking [...] It was a tropical brake, a tangle of mimosa-trees, with their feathery fronds and balls of golden down, among which grew passion-flowers and other strange, luxuriant wines. In the midst [...] stood a young Indian girl of wonderful beauty, with languishing, almond-shaped eyes. [...] Her only garment, of plaited grass or rushes [left her] lovely form bare in its unconscious purity. One hand [...] seemed to seek the head of a doe, thrust out from the foliage. [...] The girl [...] seemed a dryad of the sumptuous forest—the child of summer, and perfume, and rank, magnificent bloom. // “Oh, how beautiful!” exclaimed Hannah Thurston, at once impressed by the sentiment of the picture [...] // “Ah, you comprehend it!” exclaimed Woodbury, surprised and pleased.<sup>91</sup>

Hannah’s responsiveness to the scene surrounds her with the aura of eroticism, and yet Taylor’s aesthetic etherealization of desire buffers Hannah’s virtue. This leaves the reader to understand Hannah’s response in sentimental terms. Hannah’s imaginative sensitivity to the exotic landscape reveals to readers her genteel sensitivity to beauty and an intuitive connection to a higher transcendent world of truth and love. Taylor surrounds Hannah with a flock of women whose emotional shallowness before such scenes emphasizes the point.

Scenes like this demonstrate that Taylor wanted to believe that sentiment signified deeper truth about the individual. Ironically, however, the moment was a work of fiction. It is an illustration of how, while Taylor talked of sentiment as a reflection of character, he understood it in theatrical terms as well. Indeed the scene could reflect the broader shift then taking place from an emphasis upon character to what historians have referred to as personality.<sup>92</sup> Although sentiment was talked of as a quality that revealed the essential character of a person, increasingly it was understood in terms of appearances. Personality, the performance of character, became critical to achieving both success and social status. As bourgeois culture evolved, Karen Halttunen has explained, the

“skillfulness of [one’s] avowedly theatrical performance of gentility” outpaced all others as a measure of status.<sup>93</sup>

In many ways the importance of gentility suggests the extent that the self had become both commodity and currency in the emerging consumer culture. Taylor’s cosmopolitan experiences increased his value in the market of social exchange. What he implicitly understood even as a young man was that the horizontal lines of social organization placed a premium on self-aggrandizement. Taylor’s lecturing, letter writing, and books were performances that sold him to the public as possessing that je ne sais quoi of worldly sophistication.

As bourgeois culture expanded, more Americans felt the need to affect cultural sophistication. In 1865 the satiric critic of international travel, Robert Toms, caught the essence of the situation in the pages of Harper’s New Monthly Magazine when, regarding the American attitudes towards cosmopolitan tastes, he concluded that we as a people were on this matter increasingly given over “to a fondness of display.”<sup>94</sup>

Samuel Greene Wheeler Benjamin—the nineteenth century painter, travel writer, and diplomat—described an incident that became increasingly common in mid-nineteenth century American parlors. Benjamin attended an evening gathering at the Albany, New York home of his friend, John Saxe (a local humorist and society poet). Benjamin was amused to find his host—a man of “mercurial disposition,” and something of a raconteur—had lost his usual monopoly of the conversation to “Mr. Williams,” a young editor of the Albany Evening Journal. With the ladies gathered about, Williams was recounting in detail his recent journey to Europe and the Middle East. Knowing Williams as well as Saxe, Benjamin realized the former had consciously planned the

strategy of installing himself at the head of conversation and upon a topic in which he possessed authority difficult to assail. “Saxe, in the meantime, (his occupation gone), strode up and down the drawing room disconsolately, rubbing his bald crown, and vainly watching for an opening whereby to repossess himself of his lost lead.” In the end, Benjamin provided the opportunity for Saxe to intervene and recapture “the lead” with his own story of international experience. Williams, upon being reminded that Benjamin was born to missionaries in the East, faltered when his tale reached the port of Smyrna. He “had to proceed cautiously,” Benjamin wrote, “in the presence of one who knew the Levant so thoroughly.” It was all the loquacious Saxe needed.<sup>95</sup> Williams consciously deployed the romance of foreign travel to curry the esteem of others, in this instance the attention of ladies, and to wrest the stage from a rival; Benjamin did the same. The beleaguered Saxe, when given the chance, countered with his own story of travel.

The scene suggests one reason why travel writing enjoyed a large audience. To those less fortunate than the three in this scene, the closest they could come to gaining cosmopolitan sophistication was by attending to the books and lectures of those who had. Many relied on the “word pictures” Taylor and others painted to see what lay beyond the seas. It was, in fact, to “the many thousands, who can only travel by their firesides” that Taylor dedicated his books.<sup>96</sup> He was informative, appropriately sophisticated, and his career modeled the crafty deployment of the cosmopolitan. Understandably then, as an editor of the Cincinnati Gazette explained, it had become “a requirement of fashionable life to give ear unto [Taylor] whenever he comes along.”<sup>97</sup>

John Munn, a Chicago businessman, offers us a good example of the newly affluent American for whom Taylor’s advice had become a requirement. Modestly born

and educated in Hartford, Connecticut, Munn at thirteen became an apprentice clerk in the store of Lydia Signourney's husband with whom he fought and felt betrayed. After passing through a succession of failed apprenticeships he made his way to Mississippi where he opened a store, speculated in land, purchased slaves, and eventually landed in banking. Success made it possible for him to move back north in 1849 and there he made a fortune in real estate and railroad investments. Munn's diaries reveal the emotional and social difficulties he experienced in the transition from poorly educated clerk to wealthy capitalist. Insecure with the social expectations attendant upon his economic status, Munn sought ways to cultivate himself and his family. Following an early stint as a clerk in a bookstore, Munn pursued a course of self-culture. He frequently attended lectures in search of instruction. At an early age Munn began to draw the connections between cultural sophistication, cosmopolitanism and status. Munn held a deep affection for Lydia Sigourney whose caring attention softened the unfeeling market practicality of her husband. His journals reveal a man driven by desire to succeed yet in need of a feeling of reassurance that his fortune was a sign of grace. Like others, his journal writing served as an expression of his pursuit of spiritual improvement. The same aim turned his mind to travel. Sigourney's Pleasant Memories of Pleasant Lands, in which she visited social and cultural luminaries in both England and France, stimulated Munn's imagination. In her he found a way both to cover the harsh pursuit of self-interest in a cover of sentimental pieties of culture and associate refinement with superiority. Later, Taylor's writings and lectures, which were among Munn's favorites, sharpened his interest in international travel, and further attuned him to the equation of culture and election. Again in Taylor he also learned the social advantages that cultural sophistication

promised. In 1865 he took his family to Europe for two years. His journals from this trip and others that followed reveal an attentive if rough performance of the emotional receptiveness associated with sentimental travel. His visit made it possible to see that his children received the education he had not. Munn son was symbolic of the transformation of the family brought about by the journey. Profoundly influenced by the experience, and in homage to the mavens of elite cosmopolitanism like the Peale family, his son began a successful career as an artist. Abroad the Munn's acquired the signs of refinement that made them feel comfortable among Chicago and New York elite.<sup>98</sup>

The story was so common that just a few years later Putnam's Magazine published an article entitled "Going Abroad" that skewered the cosmopolitan affectations of those like Munn and his wife and the objectives for which they pursued them:

At home she never could succeed [...] in gathering about her the élite of the city where her lord had made her fortune. She was snubbed by her old school-friend, who had been polished at a French school [...] She was laughed at for murdering the King's English, and wearing outré apparel. In short, her social aspirations had been ruthlessly disappointed; so she coaxed her gudeman to come abroad; and, in Paris, her beautiful apartments, her showy landau, [...] do attract her errant countrymen and women—even those who ignored her on Fifth Avenue.

Though the author blames women for what he sees as social frivolity, the social recognition cosmopolitanism brought was equally important to men.<sup>99</sup> The satirical tone of the piece reveals the scorn and anxiety that the pursuit of cultural refinement could instill in both the older elite who had once counted sophistication as an indelible mark of their superiority. It also is suggestive of the power which Puritan and republican fears of decadence still retained.

Henry James' fictional character Christopher Newman from his 1876 novel The American, provides a case in point. Newman, a self-made man from the west, is drawn

to Europe in order to acquire the trophies of cultural accomplishment that will complete his credentials as a gentleman. James' character drew inspiration from men like Munn. The trans-Atlantic novel championed by James but also practiced by Hawthorne and Howells, among others, drew attention to the spread of cultural pilgrimage. While elites often served as the model for their studies, as the life of the sculptor William Wetmore Story had for Hawthorne's The Marble Faun, by the 1870s the nouveau riche and upwardly mobile new middle class were buying these novels and increasingly frequenting Europe.

Several decades before either of these novels, Taylor had presented the public with a real life example of the American traveling to Europe in search of self-improvement. Unable to express his gentility through material objects, Taylor focused upon the performance of sentiment. Taylor's careful study of the sentimental mode becomes evident in Views. The art of Rome produced in him an aesthetic and spiritual paroxysm.

I absolutely trembled on approaching the cabinet of the Apollo. I had built up in fancy a glorious ideal, drawn from all that bards have sung or artists have rhapsodized about its divine beauty. I feared disappointment-I dreaded to have my ideal displaced and my faith in the power of human genius overthrown by a form less than perfect. However, with a feeling of desperate excitement, I entered and looked upon it. Now what shall I say of it? How make you comprehend its immortal beauty? To what shall I liken its glorious perfection of form, or the fire that imbues the cold marble with the soul of a god? Not with sculpture, for it stands alone and above all other works of art-nor with men, for it has a majesty more than human. I gazed on it, lost in wonder and joy-joy that I could, at last, take into my mind a faultless ideal of godlike, exalted manhood.<sup>100</sup>

A visit to Heidelberg's famed university library yielded another demonstration of how the young man's superior sensitivity to culture reflected his elevated spiritual state. He described to readers the feelings inspired in him by the library.

You walk through hall after hall, filled with books of all kinds, from the monkish manuscript of the middle ages to the most elegant print of the present day. There is something to me more impressive in a library like this than in a solemn cathedral. I think involuntarily of the hundreds of mighty spirits who speak from these 300,000 volumes—of the toils and privations with which genius has ever struggled, and of its glorious reward. As in a church, one feels as if he were in the Presence of God; not because the place has been hallowed by His worship, but because all around stand the inspirations of His spirit, breathed through the mind of genius, to men.<sup>101</sup>

Scenes like these are repeated time and again throughout the book and with each Taylor demonstrated to his reader that he was more than a printer's apprentice. In sum, Taylor's performance of feeling in Views acts as a substitute for cruder versions of class assertion.

The emotions felt during travel were thought by many to be sincere because their appearance was assumed to have occurred spontaneously. Because they were divorced from the work-a-day world, and experienced in a moment of leisure, these feelings were also believed to be uncorrupted by the concerns of temporal existence and disconnected from the market. That fiction supported the belief that the emotions were a true expression of the observer's spiritual nature and thus his superiority. These assumptions masked the Grand Tour's performative and status defining dimension.

Hidden by the myths of authentic experience was the fact that historically the majority of those who were able to travel and craft a sentimental persona were economically privileged. Most could not voluntarily remove themselves from daily occupation or pursue the education in emotional refinement necessary for sentimental performance. The same can be said of the literary skills required for the task of letter and journal writing. Nevertheless by the middle of the nineteenth century it was becoming possible for Taylor and others to indulge in experiences once only enjoyed by elites. They could exploit the elitist associations that accompanied travel to claim greater social

status. The purported naturalness of sentiment eased suspicions of the elitist ways it could be used. Feeling rather than affectation was acceptable within republican and puritan ideals. The inclusiveness of feeling made it appear more compatible with political liberalism than the emphasis upon proper forms associated with aristocratic culture. But of course genteel focus of feeling excluded those who saw the world differently or did not possess the means to learn the requisite emotional formula.<sup>102</sup>

Taylor's great success in Views and in much of his later writing came from managing to tap the underlying ideological status improving assumptions of gentility while effectively masking his aims behind the pieties of sentiment and liberal democratic rhetoric. His travels were simplicity incarnate and thus conjured an unimpeachable sense of purity. Taylor's pedestrian mode of travel, his relative poverty, and even the aura of audacity in his venture were emphasized all to heighten the impression that his sentiments were the artless expression of his nature. And yet by undertaking the Grand Tour and his masterful performance of sentiment, Taylor appropriated the symbolic capital assigned the experience. The fact this cultural tour-de-force was achieved by a printer's apprentice in his teens, gave substance to the Jeffersonian idea of the "natural aristocracy." Bourgeois readers of Taylor's book willingly conceded his superior nature because it certified the liberal-republican ideology from which they drew hope.

Upon his return from Europe, the boy was greeted by popular success but also the admiration of the older social and cultural elite. To his delight he was called to Boston to meet some of the nation's leading men of literature. Among those he met were luminaries like Longfellow, Emerson, James Russell Lowell, and J. G. Whittier. Given less than a day to show the appreciation they had planned a week to convey, the Boston

men had to suffice themselves by taking Taylor to the famous steak house Webster's. He was then given over to Longfellow for the rest of the day. As the editor James T. Fields later wrote:

No one could possibly look upon the manly young fellow at that time without loving him. He was tall and slight, with the bloom of youth mantling a face full of eager, joyous expectation. [...] We flocked about him like a swarm of brothers. [...] When we told him how charmed we all were with his travels, he blushed like a girl, and tears filled his sensitive eyes. 'It is one of the most absorbingly interesting books I ever read!' cried one of our number, heightening the remark with an expletive [...] Taylor looked up, full of happiness.<sup>103</sup>

Celebrating Taylor in Boston, these men were reaffirming the value of culture as a marker of social status. The boy from Kennett's journey to the temples of art and literature in Europe had been appreciated as a sacrifice to their god. To them it marked his worthiness to enter their guarded circle.<sup>104</sup>

In the coming years Taylor became a champion for bourgeois ideals of culture. In time became, as Conwell suggested, the embodiment of American gentility. He returned repeatedly both privately and publicly to the compromise of values he fashioned in his very first book.

In 1850, while living in New York, Taylor became an important participant in P. T. Barnum-sponsored tour by the famed Swedish opera singer Jenny Lind. Attitudes surrounding this event illustrate several key points: the appeal of European culture to bourgeois Americans, their need to reconcile it to republican values, and their attempt to use culture as justification of social dominance. Taylor's proximity to this event was assured by his victory in a contest sponsored by Barnum for an original "American" song for Lind. Taylor's song, selected from a pool of over 700 was a jingoistic and sly genuflection to high culture.

I greet with full heart the Land of the West  
     Whose Banner of Stars o'er a world is unrolled;  
 Whose empire o'ershadows Atlantic's wide breast,  
     And opens to sunset its gateway of gold!  
 The land of the mountain, and the land of the lake,  
     And rivers that roll in magnificent tide—  
 Where the souls of the mighty slumber awake,  
     And hallow the soil for whose freedom they died!

Thou Cradle of Empire! though wide be the foam  
     That severs the land of my fathers and thee,  
 I hear, from thy bosom, the welcome of home,  
     For Song has a home in the hearts of the Free!  
 And long as they waters shall gleam in the sun,  
     And long as they heroes remember their scars,  
 Be the hands of thy children united as one,  
     And Peace shed her light on thy Banner of Stars!<sup>105</sup>

America is more than the land of the tomorrow, Lind was given to say, but also the future of art: “For Song has a home in the hearts of the Free!” The resonance of the purported merger between democracy and culture that underlies the song was probably helped by the figure of its author. Taylor was already emerging as a symbolic bridge between American and European culture.

In Europe the “Swedish Nightingale” was lauded as the epitome of elevated culture. Hoping to capitalize on the singer’s fame, Barnum, at great financial risk, enticed her out of retirement with a lucrative contract. To make the venture pay, Barnum had to draw upon a widespread longing within the bourgeoisie to co-opt and Americanize Europe cultural prestige and at the same time pique the broader sense of cultural competitiveness of the prickly democrats. The challenge was to manufacture interest in Lind that drew upon this desire for sophistication and do that in such a way as to make it all seem quite naturally American.

Astutely gauging both the craving for European culture and need to give it an American gloss, Barnum engineered a campaign to transform Lind into an American heroine—the kind of woman celebrated by the middle class.<sup>106</sup> As the cultural historian Neil Harris has observed, Barnum achieved success by selling Lind as an ideal of republican and natural womanhood.<sup>107</sup> Her simple and unaffected demeanor, her quite inner strength in bearing misfortune, and her self-sacrificing labors for charity were made the substance of countless biographical advertisements or “puffs.” Like many others, Taylor bought the humbug eagerly. “She is one of the most charmingly natural and unaffected women I ever saw,” Taylor wrote to Mary after meeting Lind, “[She was] very frank and cordial, and as simple and innocent as a Swedish peasant girl.”<sup>108</sup> Lind’s operatic art, in short, was carefully refashioned into an expression more palatable to American democratic tastes: a the product of hard work, devoid of affectations, and completely natural—hence, as Neil Harris pointed out, her voices common comparison to song birds. “Art, by her, has been only used to cultivate nature—not for a moment to disguise it,” wrote Nathaniel Parker Willis.<sup>109</sup> She was a symbol of piety and cultural refinement and thus an example of the natural aristocracy. Taylor put it simply, “[Lind] is to me a complete embodiment of Genius in Woman; for she has genius. I have seen in no one more of its truth, its earnestness, its humility, and its glorious pride. Now I am not mad about her, but I recognize her wonderful faculty and reverence her noble character.”<sup>110</sup> “[T]he more I see her,” he wrote again some months later, “the more I reverence her truth, her purity, her faith in Art, as the crown and glory of our Nature.”<sup>111</sup>

To the bourgeois proponents of vernacular gentility her singing also reflected how their aesthetic and moral understanding of art was superior to what passed for such in

popular entertainment. Her singing lay between snobby aristocratic taste and the debased music of the uneducated masses. The critic Henry T. Tuckerman put it in racial and geographic terms that reflect the biological dimension that I will discuss later. Her singing, he said, was such to “win Anglo-Saxon sympathies” of the northern races but “does not awaken the prejudices so common in Great Britain [...] against the passionate temperament and tendency to extravagance that mark the children of the South.”<sup>112</sup>

The celebration of Lind became in effect a way of trumpeting America itself. As an astute contemporary wrote, the adulation of Lind in the United States was, “a tribute to an ideal, designed to reflect credit not only on the object of veneration but the venerated themselves.” In their homage of Lind, as the Tribune itself reported, Americans showed they possessed “the capacity of appreciating excellence.” Their adulation, as the London Times put it, reflected their own “singular good taste.”<sup>113</sup> Arbiters of culture had implanted the standards of high culture into popular acceptance by pairing them with the emotions of national pride.

After the late 1850s during his repeated voyages to Europe, Taylor traded upon the cache as an expert on gentility with trendy short travel accounts published in popular middle-class magazines for “discriminating” readers. The final culminating performance as a patriarch of gentility was his editorship over the massive, voluminously illustrated, three volume Picturesque Europe: Delineations by Pen and Pencil of the Natural Features and the Picturesque and Historical Places of Great Britain and the Continent published by Appleton in 1877.

## Conclusion

The point of the sentimental compromise was to achieve reconciliation between values of liberal-republicanism and gentility that would legitimate the symbolic capital associated with culture as the measure of social hierarchy. This would fashion a more secure sense of status in a fluid social order for an anxious bourgeoisie. In other words, gentility in democratic America served to establish the middle class as a sort of cultural and spiritual aristocracy and thus accrue to them the rights to social deference and a stable position of leadership.

In 1859 Taylor built his dream home, Cedarcroft, near Kennett Square. The home which he intended to reflect “his life and work” was a symbolic union of liberal-republican values and gentility.<sup>114</sup> Others saw it as such, with one equating Taylor’s qualities as a friend to “the oaks of his Cedarcroft woodlands.”<sup>115</sup> The house was, according to Taylor, a republican “farm.” He chose to plant trees rather than topiary gardens. And he evinced a paternalistic concern for the welfare of those around him. “No man can do better work,” Taylor wrote a friend later, “for this country and people than to create such a taste of country life as will elevate and refine the character of our country society.”<sup>116</sup> On the other hand the interior of the house he adorned with busts of Shakespeare, Goethe, Bryant, and Virgil. On the walls he hung autographs of Thackeray and Tennyson. Taylor, this house proclaimed, was a man of sophistication, intellectual weight, and cultural stature.<sup>117</sup>

Symbolism aside, it was an imposing dwelling crowned with a high tower and surrounded by park-like grounds. The signs of costly construction, and decorative features, were clearly a testament to his prosperity. Few men in that region, or any for

that matter, could afford such an extensive estate. It transformed his gentility into something concrete. Cedarcroft made him a member of the landed gentry of West Chester county, and master of the countryside in which he had played as a boy. When Taylor described the pleasure of the house overlooking the town below, the sensation was certainly, in part, pride that those below were looking up towards him. Taylor's Cedarcroft was intended to symbolize a comforting union of liberal-republican values and at the same time the wish for prestige through gentility (see appendix A for a photograph of Cedarcroft). He understood that the foundation of this wholeness came from his romance of travel. This is why, in the small hole at the base of the house, above its cornerstone, Taylor placed a copy of Views.<sup>118</sup>

Ironically Taylor did not live very long or even that comfortably at Cedarcroft. The expense of the home and trouble with his neighbors necessitated long periods away from his dream house. In the late 1860s he moved back to New York City. Reality refused to live up to the illusion of wholeness and peace he wished to create with Cedarcroft. Deep inside, Taylor harbored a romantic sense of himself that his country manor and the nostalgic world he created around it failed to nourish.

---

<sup>1</sup> Bayard Taylor, Views A-Foot; or, Europe seen with a Knapack and Staff, with a preface by N. P. Willis, 9<sup>th</sup> edition (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1850), xi. For his autobiographical essay "A Young Author's Life in London" see Bayard Taylor, At Home and Abroad, 1<sup>st</sup> series (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1859).

<sup>2</sup> Richard Bushman, Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984).

<sup>4</sup> For descriptions of these changes in West Chester see J. Smith Futey and Gilbert Copy, History of Chester County, Pennsylvania, with Genealogical and Biographical Sketches (Philadelphia, 1881), 215; and Margaret Berwind Schiffer, Survey of Chester County, Pennsylvania, Architecture: 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries (Exton, Pennsylvania: 1984). Also see Bushman's Refinement of America, 373-374.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Russell H. Conwell, The Life, Travels, and Literary Career of Bayard Taylor (Boston: B. B. Russell & Co., 1879), 30. Conwell interviewed several of Taylor's teachers and classmates as part of his research.

<sup>6</sup> Bushman, Refinement of America, xii.

<sup>7</sup> On the history of manners and their social significance see Norbert Elias, The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners, and State Formation and Civilization (Oxford: Basil Blackford, 1994); and Jorge

Arditi, *A Geology of Manners: Transformations of Social Relations in France and England from the Fourteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> Though the symbolic use of travel for social significance extends deep into human history (we will examine elements of this meaning later in this study), in the sixteenth century the elites of Europe began to refine the symbolism of travel.

<sup>9</sup> On the history of the Grand Tour see William Edward Mead, *The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1914); Anthony Burgess and Francis Haskell, *The Age of the Grand Tour* (New York: Crown, 1967); and Robert Shackleton, "The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 1 (1971), 127-142.

<sup>10</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Phillip Bradley ed. (New York: Knopf, 1946), 2:173.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 298-299.

<sup>12</sup> Colin Bell, *Middle Class Families: Social and Geographical Mobility* (London, 1968). See also Sellers, *The Market Revolution*.

<sup>13</sup> Karen Haltunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

<sup>14</sup> Bayard Taylor, notebook, Box 12, item 31, Bayard Taylor Papers [hereafter cited as BTP], Cornell University Special Collections, Ithaca, New York [hereafter cited as CUSC].

<sup>15</sup> Richard Croom Beatty, *Bayard Taylor: Laureate of the Gilded Age* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1936), see chapter 1.

<sup>16</sup> Bayard Taylor, "Diary of 1842," item 40, Box 12, BTC, CUSC.

<sup>17</sup> Non-Quakers who lived in West Chester, Taylor later wrote, "were strongly colored with [the sect's] peculiar characteristics." Rebecca Taylor, despite her Lutheran heritage, carefully taught Bayard the fundamental doctrines and manners of the Society.

<sup>18</sup> By accepting the contribution of personal "works" to salvation, a belief called "arminianism"—something rejected by Puritans—evangelicals made it possible to tie the soul to worldly or social performance. Again to some this could refer to the world of taste and artistic expression. Among Quakers, more so than others, belief in inner-light had discouraged worldliness and led to a preference for plainness of dress and speech. But revivals during this period began to soften this view. The Quaker faith of many older West Chester County inhabitants like the Taylors, already harbored theological connections with the central spiritual tenants of the revivalists. In the 1650s the antinomian heresy, or belief in the individual's direct relationship with God, had formed a central part of Friends Church. For them and the later revivalists inner light transformed the individual into his or her own minister. That relationship, especially in the early orthodox "quietist" or introspective form, weakened the hierarchical structure of churches. Charles Sellers in his *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). See chapter 7.

<sup>19</sup> After 1837 the beliefs of the urbane English Quaker Joseph John Gurney who preached the importance of Christian doctrine, social activism, and hence arminianism, had an impact on Chester County. Gurneyism took a more liberal and enlightened perspective on worldly expression.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Marie Hansen-Taylor and Horace E. Scudder, *Life and Letters of Bayard Taylor*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1884), 1:73.

<sup>21</sup> Nathaniel Parker Willis, "American Travelers," *Putnam's Monthly*, 5 (June, 1855), 563-564.

<sup>22</sup> Herbert Ross Brown, *The Sentimental Novel in America, 1789-1860* (New York: Octagon Books, 1975), 78.

<sup>23</sup> The literature mentioned earlier on manners and etiquette discussed this at length. Also for an overview of how culture became so important to class distinction in America see Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

<sup>24</sup> On the influence of Common Sense philosophy in American culture see Terence Martin, *The Instructed Vision: Scottish Common Sense Philosophy and the Origins of American Fiction* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1961).

<sup>25</sup> Bayard Taylor, *Hannah Thurston, A Story of American Life* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1863), 61.

<sup>26</sup> 17 April 1841. Isaac Mickle, *A Gentleman of Much Promise: the Diary of Isaac Mickle, 1837-1845*, ed. Philip English Mackey (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977).

<sup>27</sup> Carl Bode, *The Anatomy of American Popular Culture, 1840-1861* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), 58.

- <sup>28</sup> Julia Dyson, Life and Thoughts (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen, Haffelfinger & Company, 1871), 195.
- <sup>29</sup> Cushing Strout, The American Image of the Old World (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 62.
- <sup>30</sup> Taylor, By-Ways of Europe (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1867), 8.
- <sup>31</sup> Henry T. Tuckerman, America and Her Commentators, With a Critical Sketch of Travel in the United States (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), 444-45.
- <sup>32</sup> Jefferson is quoted in Dumas Malone, Jefferson and the Rights of Man (Boston: Little and Brown, 1951), 153-156.
- <sup>33</sup> Benjamin Silliman, A Journal of Travels in England, Holland and Scotland, and of Two Passages over the Atlantic, in the Years 1805 and 1806, 2 vols. (New York: Bruce, 1810), 2:349.
- <sup>34</sup> For an historical account of the "war of words" see Stephen Spender, Love-Hate Relations: English and American Sensibilities (New York: Vintage Books, 1975) and Allison Lockwood, Passionate Pilgrims: The American Traveler in Great Britain, 1800-1914 (New York: Cornwall Books, 1981), esp. ch. 9-11. As Lockwood points out Smith's attack on American culture annoyed Americans years after its author's demise, being last mentioned by H. L. Mencken's The American Language (1919).
- <sup>35</sup> See Fanny Trollop, Domestic Manners of the Americans (1832); Charles Dickens, American Notes (1842); Sydney Smith, "Review of Adam Seybert's Statistical Annals of the United States," Edinburgh Review (January-May, 1820).
- <sup>36</sup> Grant Thorburn, Men and Manners in Great Britain: A Bone to Gnaw on for the Trollopes, Fidlers, &c. (New York: Wiley & Long, 1834); James Fenimore Cooper, Notions of America, Picked Up By a Traveling Bachelor (1828), Gleanings in Europe. By an American 2 vols. (1837); George F. Train, Spread-Eagleism (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1859).
- <sup>37</sup> Mickle, A Gentleman of Much Promise, 360.
- <sup>38</sup> On the history of the public lecture in the United States see Scott, "The Popular Lecture," also David Mead, Yankee Eloquence in the Middle West: The Ohio Lyceum, 1850-1870 (Michigan State University Press: East Lansing, Mich., 1981), and Robert J. Greef, "Public Lectures in New York, 1851-1878" (Ph. D. diss., University of Chicago, 1941).
- <sup>39</sup> Carl Schurz, The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz, 2 vols. (New York: McClure Company, 1907), 2:158.
- <sup>40</sup> On the idea of denationalization see Thurlow Weed, Letters from Europe and the West Indies, 1843-1852 (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons and Co., 1866), 107. See also Lockwood, Passionate Pilgrims, 20.
- <sup>41</sup> Jefferson quoted in Terry P. Caesar, "The Other Way Around: The Question of Travel in American Travel Writing," Alif 3(Spring, 1982), 23-37, 29.
- <sup>42</sup> Philip Freneau, The Poems of Philip Freneau, ed. Fred Lewis Pattee, 3 vols (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), 2:303-304. Quoted in Robert Weisbuch, Atlantic Double-Cross: American Literature and the British Influence in the Age of Emerson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 4.
- <sup>43</sup> James F. Cooper, Gleanings of Europe. England (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), Preface.
- <sup>44</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Culture," The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson 5 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1971-1994), 2:46.
- <sup>45</sup> Taylor, notebook, item 31, Box 12, BTC, CCHS.
- <sup>46</sup> Bayard Taylor, "Diary of 1842," 13 February 1842, item 40, Box 12, BTC, CCHS.
- <sup>47</sup> For source of these various references to Taylor see his "Diary of 1842," *ibid*.
- <sup>48</sup> For examples in Taylor's diary see entries for January 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of his "Diary of 1842," *ibid*. For Mickle see entry for 30<sup>th</sup> December 1840 in A Gentleman.
- <sup>49</sup> 23 January 1841, item 752, Diary, Weaver Collection, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio.
- <sup>50</sup> For more on the emergence of these organization see Carl Bode, The American Lyceum, Town Meeting of the Mind (New York, 1956); Wallace Kenneth Schoenberg, "The Young Men's Association, 1833-1876: The History of a Social-Cultural Organization." (Ph. D. diss., New York University, 1962). Donald M. Scott, "The Popular Lecture," The Journal of American History, 66 (1980): 791-801, 801.
- <sup>51</sup> Bayard Taylor, "The Art of Painting and Music," Lecture Box, BTP, CCHS.
- <sup>52</sup> 14-31 January 1848, Calvin Fletcher, The Diary of Calvin Fletcher: Including Letters to and from Calved Fletcher, 9 vols., eds. Gayle Thornbrough and Paula Corpuz (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1983), 4:7.
- <sup>53</sup> Quoted in Cushing Strout, The American Image of the Old World (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 63. On the impact of education materials in shaping attitudes about the world see Ruth Miller Elson,

---

Guardians of Tradition: American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1964), especially chapter 2, 4 and 5.

<sup>54</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, Home as Found (New York: W.A. Townsend and Co., 1860).

<sup>55</sup> See for example Amos Bronson Alcott, Essays on Education, 1830-1862, ed. Walter Harding (Gainesville, Fla.: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1960)

<sup>56</sup> Edgar W. Knight, ed., Reports on European Education (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1930)

<sup>57</sup> See Strout, American Image.

<sup>58</sup> Dyson, Life and Thoughts, 22.

<sup>59</sup> Washington Irving, The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent., vol. 2 of The Works of Washington Irving (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1860-1863), 78. Irving followed the Sketch Book with Bracebridge Hall (1822) and The Conquest of Granada (1829). Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky, Adrift in the Old World: The Psychological Pilgrimage of Washington Irving. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

<sup>60</sup> Mickle, A Gentleman, 9 December 1840.

<sup>61</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, Gleanings in Europe, the Rhine (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986 [1836]), 134. See also his Notions of the Americans: picked up by a traveling bachelor (Albany: State University Press of New York, 1991 [1828]), and the rest of the Gleanings series on Italy, France, and Switzerland.

<sup>62</sup> See Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950).

<sup>63</sup> See Foster Rhea Dulles, Americans Abroad: Two Centuries of American Travel (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964).

<sup>64</sup> Lynne Withey, Grand Tour and Cook's Tours. A History of Leisure Travel, 1750-1915 (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1997).

<sup>65</sup> "Travel in the United States," The Atlantic Monthly, vol. 19, no. 114 (April 1867).

<sup>66</sup> Edmund Burke, Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of the Idea of the Sublime and Beauty (London, 1757). On moral theory, in addition to the works that follow also see Francis Hutcheson, An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue (London, 1725), and An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections. With Illustrations on the Moral Sense (London, 1728).

<sup>67</sup> William Gilpin, Observations on the River Wye and Several Parts of South Wales, etc. relative to Picturesque Beauty (London, 1782).

<sup>68</sup> See Burke, Philosophical Enquire.

<sup>69</sup> Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, edited by Lawrence Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999 [1711]), 171.

<sup>70</sup> Cooper, Characteristics of Men, 178.

<sup>71</sup> Adam Smith, The Theory of Moral Sentiment, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976 [1759]).

<sup>72</sup> Catherine Maria Sedgwick, Letters from Abroad to Kindred at Home (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1841), v.

<sup>73</sup> See Perry Miller, Nature's Nation (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967).

<sup>74</sup> Lydia H. Sigourney, Pleasant Memories of Pleasant Lands (Boston: James Munroe & Co., 1844).

<sup>75</sup> Emma Willard, Journal and Letters, from France and Great-Britain (Troy, N.Y.: Tuttle, 1833).

<sup>76</sup> Marie Mitchell, Marie Mitchell: Life, Letters, and Journals (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 103.

<sup>77</sup> Margaret Fuller Ossoli, At Home and Abroad: or, Things and Thoughts in American and Europe (Boston: Crosby, Nichols, and Company, 1856), 137.

<sup>78</sup> Nathaniel Sheldon Wheaton, A Journal of a Residence During Several Months in London; including excursions through various parts of England; and a short tour in France and Scotland; in the years 1823 and 1824 (Hartford: Huntington, 1830).

<sup>79</sup> Zachariah Allen, The Practical Tourist, or Sketches of the state of useful arts, and of society, scenery, etc. in Great Britain, France and Holland, 2 vols. (Providence: Beckwith, 1832).

<sup>80</sup> Jacob Green, Notes of a Traveler, during a tour through England, France, and Switzerland, in 1828, 3 vols. (New York: Carvill, 1830).

<sup>81</sup> On the use of Hyperion as a travel book see Cushing Strout's The American Image of the Old World (New York: Harpers, 1963), 80.

<sup>82</sup> Edward Lowe Temple, Old World Memories, 2 vol. (Boston: Page, 1899), preface, 3-4, 7. Temple was intensely preoccupied with history and art. The object of his journey, he explained, was to expose himself, and others through his book, to the "historic" and "artistic" Old World that, after all, "is what magnetizes most of us who have a purpose in going to Europe." Temple has recast himself as a custodian of culture.

<sup>83</sup> George Palmer Putnam, The Tourist in Europe (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1838). For a fascinating analysis of Putnam and nineteenth-century guides see Stowe's Going Abroad. What we would characterize as more typical guides appeared during the 1860s feeding the practical needs of the many middle class travelers then making their way to Europe. Typical of these new guides were Harper's Hand-Book for Travelers in Europe and the East, the first English translations of Baedeker's famed travel companions.

<sup>84</sup> Bayard Taylor, Views A-Foot; or, Europe seen with a Knapsack and Staff, revised edition (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1863), 18.

<sup>85</sup> Conwell, Life, Travels, and Literary Career, 34.

<sup>86</sup> Sweetser, Europe on \$2 Dollars a Day; Edward Everett Hale, Ninety Days' Worth of Europe (Boston: Walker and Wise, 1861).

<sup>87</sup> See Dean MacCannell, The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class (New York: Schocken, 1976) and his The Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers (New York: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>88</sup> Harold F. Smith, American Travellers Abroad: A Bibliography of Accounts Published before 1900 (Lanham, Maryland and London: The Scarecrow Press, 1999).

<sup>89</sup> "Travel in the United States," The Atlantic Monthly, vol. 19, no. 114 (April 1867).

<sup>90</sup> Taylor to John Phillips, 7 August 1842. File H-Y, Box 6, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>91</sup> Taylor, Hannah Thurston, 95.

<sup>92</sup> On the idea of character and personality see among others Warren Susman, Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century (New York: Pantheon, 1984)

<sup>93</sup> Halttunen, Confidence Men and Painted Women, 189.

<sup>94</sup> Robert Tomes, "Americans on Their Travels," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 31 (June 1865): 57-63, 61.

<sup>95</sup> Samuel Greene Wheeler Benjamin, The Life and Adventures of a Free Lance: Being the Observations of S. G. W. Benjamin (Burlington, VT: Free Press Company, 1914), 185-6.

<sup>96</sup> Bayard Taylor, The Lands of the Saracen; or, pictures of Palestine, Asia Minor, Sicily, and Spain (New York: Putnam, 1855), vi.

<sup>97</sup> Cincinnati Gazette, 11 January 1862.

<sup>98</sup> John Munn Papers, Chicago Historical Society. Munn kept 40 volumes of personal dairies. Comments on lectures can be found in vol. 22 (box 3), 23, and 27 (box 4). His travels are covered in vol. 31-41 (boxes 5-6). Its long term effects were seen in the life of Munn's son, George Frederick, who began during that trip a life long interest in art that eventually led to his rise as one of the period's preeminent sculptors and painters.

<sup>99</sup> H. T. Tuckerman, "Going Abroad," Putnam's Magazine, 11 (May 1868): 530-538; 532.

<sup>100</sup> Taylor, Views, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, 324.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>102</sup> Shaftsbury argued too that the very act of travel signaled not an innate, but what was most likely a developed, superiority. The varied and dramatic opportunity that travel experience presented made it an ideal vehicle for the evolution of sentiment, Shaftsbury would have argued. Reflection was for him necessary for the development of virtue. "So that if a creature be generous, kind, constant, compassionate, yet if he cannot reflect on what he himself does or sees others do so as to take notice of what is worthy or honest and make that notice or conception of worth and honesty to be an object of his affection, he has not the character of being virtuous. For, thus and no otherwise, he is capable of having a sense of right or wrong, a sentiment or judgment of what is done through just, equal and good affection or the contrary." Proponents of self-culture could justify the superiority of those who traveled on the same grounds. Cooper, Characteristics of Men, 173.

<sup>103</sup> New York Tribune, 24 December 1878. When Taylor's letters from Europe began to appear in the New York Tribune, Fuller was at work there. She soon went to Europe herself. In 1846 letters from both appeared side by side in the paper front page.

<sup>104</sup> Longfellow to Taylor, 25 December 1846, File Cu-Lo to Taylor, Box 2, BTP, CUSC.

---

<sup>105</sup> W. Porter Ware and Thaddeus C. Lockard, Jr., P. T. Barnum Presents Jenny Lind: The American Tour of the Swedish Nightingale (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 15.

<sup>106</sup> Before Lind ever arrived she was hailed as a champion of republican society and as the refined yet piously sentimental self-sacrificing woman.

<sup>107</sup> Neil Harris, Humbug: The Art of P. T. Barnum (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

<sup>108</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 18 Sept. 1850, Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:185

<sup>109</sup> Quoted in Harris, Humbug, 135-136.

<sup>110</sup> Taylor to George Boker, 19 Sept. 1850, Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:186]

<sup>111</sup> Taylor to George Boker, 5 June 1851, Paul Wermuth, Selected Letters of Bayard Taylor (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1997), 89.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Quoted in Harris, Humbug, 121-122.

<sup>114</sup> Taylor described the house in a series of articles entitled "A Country Home in America." These articles were reprinted in Taylor, Home and Abroad, 2<sup>nd</sup> series (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1862), 22. Taylor wrote another set of articles about Cedarcroft in 1869 for the popular magazine Hearth and Home. In these pieces Taylor contributed his part to the sentimentalization of the domestic sanctuary.

<sup>115</sup> Conwell, The Life, Travels, and Literary Career, 16.

<sup>116</sup> Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, see chapter 15.

<sup>117</sup> Albert H. Smyth, Bayard Taylor (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1896), 121-123. It is clear from his letters that Taylor's aim was to make it the sort of home dwelled in by those who occupied positions of social prominence by virtue of their cultural achievements: much like Longfellow inhabited Craigie House, Irving lived at Sunnyside, the New England prophet, Emerson, dwelled at Olde Manse, and Lowell resided at Elmwood.

<sup>118</sup> Taylor to Richard H. Stoddard, 9 June 1859, BTC, CCHS.

### Chapter 3

#### **Cultivating the Inner Self: The Psychic Economy of the Romantic Hero**

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 1846 Bayard Taylor fell asleep in a small and shabby room of an Aldgate chophouse. He had arrived in London that morning cold, wet, and tired from his walk across Normandy. With only eight pence in his pocket he had gone to bed hungry. Despite the situation the young man slept soundly. The bundle of manuscript poems in his knapsack was as good as gold, or so he thought. One of those poems, “The Liberated Titan,” was “a manuscript of some twelve hundred lines.” “I fancied it to be something entirely new in literature,” Taylor later remembered. “I did not doubt, for a moment, that any London publisher would gladly accept it” or that the poem’s “appearance would create not a little sensation.”<sup>1</sup> He never managed to sell that bit of verse, or any of the others for that matter. Nonetheless the poem provided a comforting sense of empowerment. The title suggested a Promethean self-importance that protected his psyche against the misfortunes of circumstance.

The foundation of this inner sense of importance, without which Taylor’s evening above the Aldgate cemetery would have been far less comfortable, emerged in the late 1830s. In the previous decades a literary and aesthetic romanticism had gained widespread popularity. The rise of manufacturing, competition, and the demand for greater discipline in the workplace produced anxiety that older religious beliefs and social customs could not easily allay. As a counterweight to these feelings, Romantics became preoccupied with intuition, imagination, and emotional verve that seemed to have been lost in the mechanization of life and thought. The ecstatic narcissism of the heroes created by Byron, Longfellow, and others went well beyond the wan sentimentality

associated with genteel aesthetics. In them the preoccupation with the pieties of sincerity and decorous forms of taste gave way to an obsession with establishing a unique, vital sense of inner individuality.

At still another level in Taylor's writings from Europe between 1844 and 1846 one detects his intention to craft a romantic identity from the events of his journey. This aim coexisted alongside the competitive ideologies of success and status because by the early 1840s even as Taylor cultivated gentility as a way to climb to social prestige he could not avoid what he termed the "sober aspects of reality."<sup>2</sup> His prospects for upward mobility were severely hampered social barriers erected to defend existing privilege. Economic troubles posed an equally challenging hurdle. Between 1837 and 1843 much of Chester County remained blighted by the economic collapse. The "apprehension" with which he described walking the streets of West Chester colored his optimism. Observing the state of the nation from Concord, Ralph Waldo Emerson detected the loss of confidence that came with the depression:

Society has played out its last stake; it is check-mated. Young men have no hope. Adults stand like daylaborers idle in the streets. [...] The present generation is bankrupt of principles and hope, as of property.<sup>3</sup>

In his private journals and letters Taylor confided his doubts and his unhappiness with the uncertainty that now lay ahead. My "face may be beaming with smiles," he wrote, but I am "full of pensive sorrow, and long for the days of boyhood. [...] [Now] the stern duties of maturer years begin to weigh heartily upon the spirit."<sup>4</sup>

His concerns were coupled with other suspicions growing around the enlightened and optimistic liberal Christianity of the time. As we have seen, a Calvinistic uneasiness

lurked at the heart of Taylor's personal optimism and Scottish common-sense theory of human progress.<sup>5</sup>

Taylor found comfort in the midst of these feelings by gradually adopting an emphasis upon individual subjectivity, or romantic individuality, that textured the liberal-republican and genteel way he understood the world. The economic, political, and social romanticism that had so heavily influenced Taylor's life was matched by a romantic cultural philosophy that celebrated the process of striving. Questioning the society's blind faith in rationalist thought, increasing materialism, and rosy sentimentalism, romanticism encouraged a renewed interest in the emotional and imaginative life of man as the spring of human consciousness. The convergence of these developments led Taylor, like others, to an emphasis on his expressive individuality: that is, one different from his economic, political, and cultured identity. In turn, however, he began to think of this unique individuality as the basis of his social superiority.

The changes added fresh importance to Taylor's romance of travel and encounter with the foreign. Both evolved at this time into an important vehicle for the elaboration of this inner compensatory self. Some Americans used travel abroad as a means to craft an alternative measure of self-worth. Romantics believed the freedom of travel offered an opportunity for the expression of the emotional, intuitive, and imaginative aspirations that formed one's inner self, or distinctive and superior individuality. Indeed they thought that while traveling in exotic lands the encounter with grand spectacles of history or of nature, and in the personal trials that sometime accompanied these experiences, the inner self was revealed. For Taylor, in other words, the predicament he found himself in that evening above Aldgate cemetery—alone in a foreign land with nothing but the

scribbled expression of his inner most thoughts between him and starvation—was proof itself of his superiority.

### **Stirrings of Romantic Disaffection**

Taylor's success throughout his life owed a great deal to the way he exploited liberal-republican and genteel ideology to achieve approval and admiration. At the same time, however, Taylor's private life and the public persona contained rebellious counter-currents. In his youth this centered round an oppositional outlook fueled by a sense of alienation. At the Unionville Academy where he started school in 1840, Taylor began to realize the trouble he would have attaining the lofty ambitions he had set for himself. His education and family connections were inadequate for his ambition.

By the age of fifteen Taylor recognized the limitations of his education. He later expressed his frustrations in autobiographical fiction. In the novel John Godfrey's Fortune the headmaster of a school strikingly similar to Unionville Academy did not appear, according to the narrator, to actually possess the relentless ambition he advocated in the classroom. According to the narrator of the novel the man's "attainments were superficial" and his "one great skill" was "in concealing his deficiencies."<sup>6</sup> In real life Taylor contended with another problem. His father did not comprehend the importance that his son's ambitions placed on attaining the best education possible. Despite his son's best efforts to convince him otherwise, Joseph Taylor denied the boy the opportunity to study in the superior schools of New England. With only two years of formal education his hopes of becoming a "scholar" or "man of learning" flagged. All through these years the young man knew he faced an uncertain future. He asked himself: "What must I do? What should I become?"<sup>7</sup> Lacking connections, poor, and with a modest education, his

grander ambitions appeared fantasies. And still those ambitions, combined with his taste for culture and his belief in the infinite opportunity of “landscapes beyond,” made the existing possibilities of employment in Chester County appear beneath him.

Taylor lashed out. He began to confide in his journal annoyance with the blighted ambition of the other boys and the hollow self-importance of the school’s head-master Mr. Gauze. To channel his anger he began to write a sketch of the place that eventually became the basis of the fictional school attended by John Godfrey. But his discontent was directed outward to the people of Chester County as well, particularly the culture of Quakerism, and the limits of rural gentility. All of which, like his schoolmates at Unionville, became fodder for later fictional satires like Joseph and His Friends.

Part of the problem he faced, or so he began to think, was “the narrow valley in which I was born.”<sup>8</sup> How could one succeed, asked Taylor, in a place which lacked men “of refined culture, through whom [one] might have measured and understood himself” and learn to take pride in his exceptional qualities rather than feel “a sense of shame” for having them?<sup>9</sup>

Taylor was also becoming vaguely aware of the limits of gentility itself. Sentiment, he had begun to surmise, was too often reduced to a shallow set of platitudes and observances drained of any substance except as a standard beyond which respectable society did not go.

Any sign of an unusual taste, or a different view of life, excited their suspicion, and the most of them were incapable of discriminating between independent thought on moral and social questions, and “free-thinking” in the religious significance which they attached to the word.<sup>10</sup>

What middle class culture accepted as “proper” sentiment could be comically rigid.

Taylor was not alone in this recognition. In far off Cambridge, Massachusetts the 20-

year old Margaret Fuller complained of the same social narrowness. Writing to a friend, Fuller had composed a satirical list of sentimental virtues she was, or ought to be, attempting to master: from fainting, crying, and playing the harp to reading, writing, and giving advice. Her reward for success, she wryly observed, would be to play her “proper part” in society as either “a sprightly young lady” or a mildly naughty “Syren!!”<sup>11</sup> Taylor later mocked this artifice of sentimental femininity in a series of characters in his novels. He targeted women whom he characterizes as having “learned to write Italian hand”—as opposed to actually learning Italian—as well as “to paint tulips and roses on white velvet” and “make wax-flowers.”<sup>12</sup>

In West Chester, Taylor began to sense that such role-playing was all that mattered for many. Most, he feared, cared for culture no more than respectable society demanded. Many of his peers who seemed “ambitious of culture,” “tired easily” when given the chance to attain it.<sup>13</sup> Some thought gentility only a term for leisure. Many others simply accepted it as the natural face of their social advantages. Sadly Taylor began to suspect that too often behind the social façade of cultural refinement nothing more lay hidden than smug superiority or debased character. The shallow classmate who declared to John Godfrey, “Catch me earning the money I spend; I am going to be a gentlemen!” was one of the many caricatures of the type in Taylor’s literature.<sup>14</sup>

No wonder Taylor wrote in his diary while at the school, that he was filled with an overriding desire to “escape from this mansion of hypocrisy.”<sup>15</sup> But he found no relief when he moved to West Chester. To Phillips he wrote:

I am almost like an exile in this place; no social companionship—no kindred minds [...] all aristocracy, manners, pride, and course vulgarity. My companions [...] idle away their time [...] devoting no thought to their mental and moral improvement, spending their nights in pursuits which inevitably led to ruin.

What goaded him most was a sneaking suspicion that their faults would not “inevitably lead to ruin.”<sup>16</sup> Disappointment had stirred in him the thought that society may actually trade in false promises. Although Taylor felt his peers at Unionville were, for the most part, “plodding youths,” nonetheless many he knew were destined to success due to family connections.<sup>17</sup>

It was an inescapable fact to any but the most blindly optimistic that the social world did not always conform to the moral order that middle-class Americans believed it reflected. Virtue was not always awarded its due. It was equally clear that the undeserving and wicked had received more than their fair share of success. During these years, in other words, Taylor felt a creeping sense of betrayal.<sup>18</sup>

The pinch between elevated expectation and dismal reality was one felt in varying degrees by many of Taylor’s contemporaries. Historian Anne Rose argues that the propensity among men during this period to pursue multiple careers was as much a result of their frustration at the failure of work to meet the high expectations they placed upon it, as it was due to the surfeit of opportunities.<sup>19</sup> These men increasingly shied away from professional commitments out of fear of entrapping themselves in dead end jobs. The men studied here, including Taylor, lend weight to that thesis. Camden, New Jersey diarist Issac Mickle’s various attempts at law, music, inventing, journalism, history, and politics offer another example. Driven by high expectations he placed on himself, Mickle energetically sought avenues to realize his dreams but continually shifted from one endeavor to another.<sup>20</sup>

None understood the limitation on public opportunity better than Margaret Fuller. Already thirty-two when Taylor wrote his lament to Phillips, Fuller had been struggling

with expectations all her life. Society expected Fuller to stay within the “private” sphere of the home and severely circumscribed her ability to operate within the masculine world of “public” life.<sup>21</sup> Circumstance had brought Fuller into a particularly frustrating conflict with the limits this division imposed. Fuller, blessed with an expansive intellect and given what was then seen as a “man’s” education, harbored hopes for social distinction that were sharpened when she drifted into the New England Transcendentalist circle. But Fuller found her opportunities to satisfy her intellectual ambitions cut off. As she later cursed, “A man’s ambition with a woman’s heart is an evil lot.” These feelings increased after her father’s death when she shouldered the responsibility of supporting the family. While “I love best to be a woman,” she continued, “womanhood is at present too straightly-bounded to give me scope.” Faced with the social constraints of womanhood, yet burdened with the responsibilities and ambitions of “a man,” Fuller experienced a different sort of frustration with socially imposed limitations.<sup>22</sup>

Where both Taylor and Fuller meet is in the way the resulting contradictions they experienced bred in each a suspicion of bourgeois society, and, more deeply, skepticism of the conventions society used to define virtue. As we shall see, they also shared the decision to look to travel and life abroad for a solution. Taylor’s disappointment was a result of the optimistic view that there were no boundaries on opportunity. In a society where the public sphere was restricted largely to men, women like Fuller confronted limited opportunity and diminished expectation.<sup>23</sup>

Taylor’s frustration erupted in a number of ways. Periodically amid the blithe optimism of his letters and journals one finds skeptical and misanthropic fits. In one instance, after attending a lecture given by Gauze on the possibilities of opportunity in

America—Gauze’s example, of course, was that “anyone could become” President of the United States—Taylor derided the notion as just short of “fantasy.” Only a few weeks later Taylor scorned as “nonsensical” another lecture by an “esteemed gentleman,” this time on the topic of the inevitable “Improvement of Society.”<sup>24</sup>

Even as he began to drift towards the idea of making writing his chosen vocation, the question of “what rank I should attain in it [...] troubled me.”<sup>25</sup> A few months after taking up residence in West Chester, Taylor turned to his poetry to express his disillusionment. He published the results in the Jeffersonian, one of the town’s papers. As its title suggests, the subject of “The Dream of Fame” is the same as his enthusiastic first poem. Now, however, the familiar topic is treated darkly. The “student” of the story is one “upon whose soul Ambition reigned supreme” but who returns many years later to the site of his wild dreams “a pale-sad man,” “care-worn and weary of the hollow world.”

His high hopes crushed, and haughty spirit bowed,  
He came to find the fame he fondly sought,  
A wild and splendid dream, that in return  
For years and manhood’s vigor wasted, gave  
But thorns instead of laurels.<sup>26</sup>

Taylor later used the instance of awakening frustrations and fear over the future as a pivotal scene in the development of his autobiographical double John Godfrey. John despaired of his prospects when, like Taylor, he faced the difficulties of attaining social respectability. His “strong and brave” cousin Alexander Penrose rejected the concern out of hand. The “opinion” of others was not “worth a curse.” “If I take care of myself” that will be enough. Much of what was admired was rubbish. “I sometimes think that if there are such things as honesty and virtue we must look for them among the dregs of society.” The top,” he concluded, “is nothing but a stinking scum.”<sup>27</sup>

John's thoughts seemed suggestive of a broader rebellion sweeping through American society. Many were feeling disconnected from traditional sources of emotional and economic support. Taylor was forced to abandon the agricultural patriarchy that had given structure to their father's existence. Significantly, in the novel both John and Penrose retreated into themselves when they lost a parent and thus the traditional anchor of family affection. John crises came when he was left orphaned by the death of both his father and mother. Penrose's loss was metaphoric. He chose to reject his weak widowed father who was obliged to marry "his cook!—a vulgar and brazen wench who sat down to the table in the silks and laces of the dead!" His shallow sister's enslavement to "fashion" further alienated him. As a result both he and John felt a sense of emotional rootlessness. Each experience, in other words, produced a sense of disinheritance: a loss of their right to a stable unchanging world of emotional satisfaction. This element of the plot suggestively resembled the author's personal loss of Joseph Taylor's love, a situation echoed in the absence of the father in both characters' lives.<sup>28</sup>

John's feeling of emotional dislocation embodies the sense of lost promise as well as historical and spiritual disinheritance Taylor and others were also struggling to understand. Among some during the previous century a gap between man, God, and nature had begun to emerge with the decline of traditional theocratic beliefs. Voltaire, who Taylor read in the early 1840s, asked penetrating questions about traditional metaphysical beliefs. More broadly the emergence of Higher Criticism in biblical studies questioned the literal veracity of Old and New Testament truth. Combined with the rise of secular naturalism, God seemed increasingly removed from the lives of some. While

faith in God remained strong, an increasing number of educated Americans like Taylor experienced a collapse of religious and moral certainties.

Taylor's upbringing as a Quaker had taught him to doubt the literal interpretation of the Bible. Elsewhere the deistic beliefs of Enlightenment thinkers gave him a more expansive sense of religious faith. He approved of those who took what he called "a broader view of humanity," one that was not based solely on the Bible. In an attempt to reconcile his weakened faith with science he turned to the writings of the popular Christian philosopher Thomas Dick. Dick sought to combine science and evangelicalism into a devotional theology of nature.<sup>29</sup>

Yet few middle-class Americans abandoned their belief in God. Taylor was no exception. His study of Dick and moral philosophy helped hold his flagging faith together. Elements of genteel culture and liberal Christianity were aimed at bridging this widening divide. The elevation of feeling and appreciation for nature, for example, that characterized the genteel softening of neoclassicism attempted to restore a sense of individual connection to the larger world.

The impulse to restore some degree of the certainties formerly provided by supernatural beliefs led to a concentrated attack upon the spread of scientific methodology, utilitarian purposefulness, and cultural materialism for it seemed to some that it was due to them that life may have been robbed of its meaning. From the West Chester library Taylor borrowed the writings of Thomas Carlyle. In Sartor Resartus he would have encountered passages that expressed the fearful uncertainties he felt.

But for me, so strangely unprosperous had I been, the net-result of my Workings amounted as yet simply to--Nothing. How then could I believe in my Strength, when there was as yet no mirror to see it in? [...]  
Alas, the fearful Unbelief is unbelief in yourself; and how could I

believe? Had not my first, last Faith in myself, when even to me the Heavens seemed laid open, and I dared to love, been all too cruelly belied? The speculative Mystery of Life grew ever more mysterious to me: neither in the practical Mystery had I made the slightest progress, but been everywhere buffeted, foiled, and contemptuously cast out. [...] In the midst of their crowded streets and assemblages, I walked solitary; [...] To me the Universe was all void of Life, of Purpose, of Volition, even of Hostility: it was one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb. Oh, the vast, gloomy, solitary Golgotha, and Mill of Death! Why was the Living banished thither companionless, conscious? Why, if there is no Devil; nay, unless the Devil is your God?<sup>30</sup>

Romantics sought to reinsert the spirit of Man and God into the mechanical universe imagined by secular thought. The struggle by romantic intellectuals in France, Germany, England, and later in the United States, to formulate a reconnecting link between man and the supernatural led to intensified interest in the interior world of human consciousness: particularly in the connection of man's spirituality with his creative, instinctual, and passionate nature.<sup>31</sup> It was a belief that saw man's inner self—described in spiritual terms as the soul and in the secular language of psychological faculties as intuition, emotions, and imagination—as constituting a nobler truth than that found in facts or reason.<sup>32</sup>

In light of these developments, John's rejection of the opinion of others reflected something far more than the disappointments of a young man. They suggested the author's own deepening uneasiness with conventional social and material values. While the troubles Joseph Taylor faced following the 1837 collapse awakened in his son a degree of suspicion regarding the optimism that pervaded the period, it could not have helped his belief in the articles of faith that middle class society claimed as objective truths. "Men awoke," Henry Ward Beecher said in the days after the Panic, as if "from gorgeous dreams in the midst of desolation."<sup>33</sup>

Beneath Penrose's "cynical attitudes," however, lurked an idealism: a belief that the truth stood outside the boundaries of the normal, material world. Even more radical was the suggestion that truth lay inside the individual, perhaps even depended upon the self alone. In Concord, Ralph Waldo Emerson recognized that the misfortunes and anxieties caused by the social and economic instabilities of life were furthering the spread of interest in idealism. In his journal during the 1837 collapse, Emerson had guessed that the resulting despair would give a push in this direction. "I am forced to ask," he wrote in the wake of the devastation, "if the Ideal might not be the path left." "It is to be taken for granted it is impracticable? Behold the boasted world has come to nothing. [...] Behold [...] here is the Soul erect and Unconquered still."<sup>34</sup> And indeed the end of Taylor's poem "The Dream of Fame" revealed that the young man's disillusionment with worldly ambition was accompanied by a turn towards idealism and imagination. Defeated by life the old man of the poem found solace in the final rejection of earthly success. Returning to the place where he dreamed as a youth, he rediscovered the simple imaginative impulse that had animated his desires.<sup>35</sup>

Alongside Taylor's disquiet emerged a different view of travel, the foreign, and himself. As disappointment nourished his critical faculties and idealism, the freedom encountered during a journey into the wider world seemed to provide an opportunity to re-imagine the self in unconventional ways. One could break away, in other words, from the prescribed social terms of valuation. This meant, of course, abandoning to some degree the comforts as well as limits of social conventions. In the space opened up by this break a romantically ideal, conceptually independent, and self-defining sense of

identity might emerge. International settings were perfect locations to fashion these independent notions of self.

To a certain extent, Washington Irving had modeled for Americans this use of foreign experience. Irving's choice to become a writer following the collapse of his family's business in Liverpool profoundly disillusioned Irving. "I have never passed so anxious a time in my life," he wrote. "My rest has been broken & my health & spirits almost prostrated." Later, to another friend, he recalled those dark times: "Good heavens what I suffered for months and months and months. I lost all appetite, I scarcely slept—I went to my bed every night as to a grave." However, it was through this trial that Irving was reborn. "The new calamity," he said, "seemed while it prostrated my spirits, to purify & elevate my soul." Events had forced him to turn for comfort to his imagination and ideality. Readers did not know the history that led to the Sketchbook but the wandering, itinerant figure of Geoffrey Crayon reflected Irving's decision to re-invent himself through travel.<sup>36</sup>

Some born after the second decade of the century more fully embraced this romantic vision. As Taylor's and Fuller's lives suggest, it encouraged a fascination with foreign experience. Taylor and Fuller exploited travel to fashion an inner sense of self, a romantic sense of identity. And they used the public preoccupation with travel to earn social approval.

In his influential 1822 "Table-Talk" essay "On Going a Journey," William Hazlitt, one of the period's most perceptive observers of cultural trends, argued that travel had become a powerful device in the transformation of subjectivity during what he later termed this "age of revolution."

[Travel] demands an effort to exchange our actual for our ideal identity; and to feel the pulse of our old transports revive very keenly, we must ‘jump’ all our present comforts and connexions [sic.] [...] The time we [spent abroad] [...] appears to be cut out of our substantial, downright existence, and never to join kindly to it. We are not the same, but another, and perhaps more enviable individual, all the time we are out of our own country.

This use of travel had spread to the United States through the writings of European romantics. Amid the social upheaval of the time it found a ready audience among those like Taylor who were struggling to comprehend their place in the changing nation.<sup>37</sup>

### **Models of Romantic Travel**

In the writings of literary romantics, Americans of the nineteenth-century found direct inspiration for the use of travel as a symbolic journey into the inner self.<sup>38</sup>

Americans of the early nineteenth century, like Taylor, ingested ideals of romantic individualism from European literature and poetry. From the circulating libraries of Kennett and West Chester, Taylor borrowed the popular works of “Scott, Byron’s, Moore and Wordsworth.”<sup>39</sup> While Scott popularized the historical romance, it was the rage for Byron that most shaped the romantic notion of individuality. In 1814 Byron’s publisher, astonished by the sensation caused by his author’s newest book, wrote to a friend, one “cannot meet a man on the street who has not read or heard read The Corsair.” Byronism swept over the United States between 1815 and 1830. It concentrated in Taylor and the public’s mind a vision of romantic individualism centered around the theme of expressive freedom realized through the experience of travel.<sup>40</sup>

Byron’s Childe Harold, Manfred, and Don Juan were all extensively sold in the United States. Harold, the eponymous nobleman of the first of these, became the arch example of romantic heroism. Widely accepted as a thinly disguised version of Byron himself, the character modeled for readers the self-promotional possibilities of

confessional literature. The poem reported the private longing and interior life of the traveler as he journeyed through Europe. Driven to self-exile by the death of friend and weariness with the common, Harold sought abroad personal understanding and fulfillment. He found release from his pain in the solitude and ruined grandeur of Europe's ancient history and natural wonders. In this way Byron's poem possessed all the effects of the sentimental travel tale and was much admired for its elegiac passages. But Byron's popularity lay in the way he departed from the conceit of sentimental feeling. Instead Byron intensified the emotional register of the sentimental journey by moving the narrator's bitter misanthropic self-awareness to the center of the story. This transformed his story into narcissistic drama.<sup>41</sup>

The starkly confessional nature of Byron's poetry was critical to this thematic shift. The expression of intimate and often scandalous feelings characteristic throughout Byron's works convinced readers that his writings were autobiographical. Scott wrote when reviewing Childe Harold that Byron "covered by no very thick disguise" is presenting himself "before the public, an actual living man expressing his own sentiments, thoughts, hopes and fears."<sup>42</sup> To readers like Taylor this impression charged the landscape with unparalleled emotional intensity. In the early 1840s Taylor began using selections from Childe Harold as a literary counterpoint to the more traditional travel books he read. For instance, when reading about Spain during his autodidactic grand tour of Europe, Taylor reread the incidents of Harold's Iberian travels. Byron, like other Romantics, made the landscape an extension of himself. Taylor in turn used Byron to invest the landscape with an emotional vitality absent from other works of travel.

Taylor's use of Byron to construct his own travels was hardly unusual. It followed the pattern of tourist literature described in the last chapter. In response to popular demand Byron himself had added notes to help readers follow and even duplicate Harold's travel.<sup>43</sup> Years later Taylor did the same following the spectacular success of Views. In England publishers produced illustrated references works and pocket versions for the reader who wished to emulate Byron.<sup>44</sup>

The fascination with Byron in the United States was as wide as it was deep. Members of America's cosmopolitan elite like George Henry Calvert, the son of a wealthy Maryland planter and the heir to an aristocratic lineage, possessed the means to emulate Byron in relative comfort. Having acquired a taste for adventure during a rebellious phase at Harvard, he set off for Europe in 1823 to rediscover his roots and came back with a fascination for romantic literature that he later regretted.<sup>45</sup>

In those who were not destined to inherit Calvert's social status there are signs that interest with Byron may have ran much deeper. The painter Thomas Cole, who immigrated to Ohio from England with his parents in 1818, began his life apprenticed to a woodblock engraver. Although Cole had already made a reputation as a painter in New York when he traveled to Europe in 1829, he longed for a deeper sense of purpose. Byron seemed to satisfy that need. Cole continually mentioned the poet in his letters and journals. His comments indicate how Cole used Harold's journey and responses to the sights in order to script his own experience. Cole helped spread this experience to others by producing and displaying in America several paintings based on scenes from Byron's works.<sup>46</sup>

As had been the case with Scott and Wordsworth, to those like Cole, Byron himself became a powerful object of veneration. Besides visiting the sites of Harold's adventures many American travelers journeyed to Byron's home and grave. And they carried with them a surprising intensity of feeling. Benjamin Moran became angry when his reverie before the fallen poet's grave was disturbed by the laughter of other tourists.<sup>47</sup> New Hampshire physician Andrew McFarland, after having retraced Byron's journey across Europe, was so moved at his gravesite he left a poem in homage.<sup>48</sup> Byron's words echoed in Taylor's writing throughout his journey.<sup>49</sup>

Many who were unable to travel sought other ways to honor and emulate their hero. The publisher and children's author Samuel Goodrich reports that during the 1820s and 1830s "imitators of Byron sprang-up in countless locations across the nation." Some flooded his offices with sophomoric outpourings while many others were content to simply imagine themselves as Byronic travelers.<sup>50</sup> Young New Hampshire diarist Julia Dyson read Byron's romantic travels at the same time as Taylor. In both readers, it inspired a hunger to "learn the French and Italian languages" and to see distant lands.<sup>51</sup> One of Taylor's favorite American poets as a young man, McDonald Clarke, wrote fervently about his debt to Byron. Like his hero, Clarke had taken-up the wandering life himself; unfortunately for him, however, not in the sunny hills of Tuscany, but in the deadly, unromantic dens and muddy backstreets of America's antebellum cities.<sup>52</sup>

In Washington Irving's Newstead Abbey, a book about his visits to Byron's ancestral home, the author tells the sad story of a poor young deaf-mute woman who, like him, had come to pay homage to the poet. The woman poignantly pours out her sorrows in a series of poems and letters addressed to the deceased Byron. In the midst of her

melancholy Byron's poetic adventures, she wrote, had been her one great escape. Even within the alternatively cynical and genteel masked heart of Irving's prose, the resonance with which Byron sounded among early nineteenth-century Americans is evident. The book was one of the Byronic-inspired successes of 1835.<sup>53</sup>

Another was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's Outre-Mer. Without a doubt one of the most successful Americans to build upon the romantic persona that Byron popularized, through the mid-1840s Longfellow was admired less as a poet than author of two popular romantic travel prose works that bore the imprint of the exiled provocateur. The first, Outre-Mer, was published in 1835. It was an oddly eclectic text, including a combination of sentimental travel description and cultural essays given by the author, the occasional appearance of a first person narrator, and third person passages from the unknown writer of a "manuscript de voyage." Yet behind Longfellow's muddled narrative voice was a Byronic traveler. In an effort to approximate the correct emotional register Longfellow appropriates the pilgrimage metaphor. And with it he assumes the tone of spiritual exaltation that had previously been weakly employed by sentimental writers.

The Pays d'Outre-Mer, or the Land beyond the Sea, is a name by which the pilgrims and crusaders of old usually designated the Holy Land. I, too, in a certain sense, have been a pilgrim of Outre-Mer; for to my youthful imagination the old world was a kind of Holy Land; lying afar off beyond the blue horizon of the ocean; and when its shores first rose upon my sight, looming through the hazy atmosphere of the sea, my heart swelled with the deep emotions of the pilgrim, when he sees afar the spire which rises above the shrine of his devotion.<sup>54</sup>

The idea of "pilgrim" embodies the key difference between the romantic interior self and the liberal-republican or genteel version of individualism. Although all these personas share the romantic themes of striving and pursuit of self-realization the

subjectivity of Longfellow's pilgrim has important differences. It is focused upon imagination, intuitive spirituality, and enthusiasm, those sources from which intense feeling spring. Taylor took Longfellow's travel accounts along with him, helping to turn his own travels from the transience of a tourist excursion to the intensity that surrounded pilgrimage.

Longfellow crafted a stronger romantic protagonist in his next book, Hyperion. In it Longfellow provided, in the character Paul Flemming, a more fully wrought American version of the Byronic hero. Flemming flees America to find emotional sustenance in the Old World. The pain of a friend's death and an underlying disaffection with the mundane, spiritless world of daily life sends him into a self-imposed exile in Europe. Hyperion was one of the top seven best selling books of 1839.<sup>55</sup>

Like many others, Taylor strongly identified with Flemming. He devoured the library association's copy of the book, and then spent some of his meager pocket money to buy his own. He committed large passages to memory. The emotional associations with which the book imbued Europe shaped his imagination of that landscape. In this he was not alone. Americans began to carry Hyperion to Europe in addition to their standard guides. Later Taylor helped popularize this habit by doing the same and mentioning the book several times in Views. His references show that as Cole had done with Byron, Taylor projected himself into the story of Flemming adventures. When he later visited the same locations Taylor described feeling emotional "suffering" similar to that of the novel.<sup>56</sup>

The emotional bond Taylor developed towards Longfellow during these years colored the intensity of his relationship once they actually met. For the rest of his life

Taylor felt a powerful intimacy with the poet. After Taylor's return from Europe in 1846 he began a long, though not especially close, relationship with the poet. Nonetheless near the end of Taylor's life he told a friend that the old poet had meant more to him than anyone he had ever known.

From the first, Longfellow has been to me the truest and most affectionate friend that ever man had. He always gives me courage to go on, and never fails to lift me forward into hopeful regions [...] He is the dearest soul in the world, and my love for him is unbounded."<sup>57</sup>

Eventually Longfellow grew to invest Taylor with the heroic qualities of the romantic traveler. At Taylor's death Longfellow composed a moving poem to the man that had idealized the romantic wanderers he had inspired in his youth.

Let the lifeless body rest!  
He is gone, who was its guest;

Gone, as travelers haste to leave  
An inn, nor tarry until eve.

Traveler! in what realms afar,  
In what planet, in what star,

In what vast, aerial space,  
Shines the light upon thy face?

In what gardens of delight  
Rest thy weary feet to-night?"<sup>58</sup>

Taylor felt the same intimacy or "true friendship" with another travel writer he had read as a boy. During the 1830s and 1840s a more famous and influential exemplar of the romantic wanderer in the United States was none other than Taylor's childhood idol the ebullient Nathaniel Parker Willis. Referred to by friends and the press as an American "Pelham"—the dandy and morally ambiguous character of Sir Edward G. D. Bulwer-Lytton's popular second novel Pelham; or, Adventures of a Gentleman—Willis

was a celebrated beau ideal of cosmopolitan gentility and a writer of fashionable travel and poetry. Like Bulwer-Lytton's character Pelham, who mingled with the lower classes and defended his dissolute Byronic friend Reginald Glanville from the charges of murder, Willis derived much of his popularity from his less respectable image as a social renegade (see appendix A for an illustration of Willis).

Willis, who had grown-up during the first bloom of transatlantic literary culture prior to 1825, had absorbed the lessons of the German and High Romantic philosophy of idealism and imagination. His first magazine, The New American Monthly, republished the groundbreaking Hazlitt "Table-Talk" essays. "I wish to heaven you read German," he wrote to a friend in 1828, "or knew their sublime philosophy."

They look at life as an ante-room to a magnificent temple—and do not waste their worship before they get to the altar. It is damn'd beautiful to think of men who consider the whole range of existence as passages to one great godlike nature, and do not look aside or loiter with their very wings folded behind for the wretched perishing ambitions of money-getting and sense.<sup>59</sup>

While a young man Willis too had grown disillusioned. In his thinly autobiographical poetry and fiction he presented himself as a moody, passionate, and misunderstood classic Byronic hero; however, he felt most at home as the ironically inflected late-Byronic literary persona of the sensual and self-absorbed soul overly burdened with gifted feeling. The shift occurred when Willis fled to Europe from Boston under a cloud of scandal. In a series of travel letters published in Boston papers Willis traded-in the persona for this newest incarnation of the romantic type.<sup>60</sup>

When Taylor began reading Willis' travels in 1835, he discovered in them a heroic persona that marked a significant offshoot to the familiar romantic type.

Emulating Pelham, Willis did not drift through the world in a withdrawn or misanthropic

haze. Instead he accepted that existence was mostly illusion and turned this knowledge into a self-consciously iconoclastic identity. Unrestricted by the convention of home, Willis could playfully plum the depth of this persona. True to character he repeatedly crossed the boundaries of propriety by divulging secrets regarding the private lives of others. Ironically the recklessness he displayed suggested something genuine lay within the wit and words.<sup>61</sup> Underneath the habiliment of the romantic rake, Willis hinted, was a creative impulse that was as close to the true self as one might get.

To those who struggled to find a sense of importance belied by their social position, the existence of their hidden selves and the drama to remain true to them filled a void.<sup>62</sup> The travels of their romantic heroes seemed an expression of personal freedom and individuality. This was in contrast to the liberal-republican and genteel approaches to travel which asserted that the containment of physical and moral dangers of contact with the foreign suggested the superiority of the individual. In the romantic mode the flirtation with the transgressive potential of travel could lead the individuals to discover their true selves. Thus the quest could produce an alternative and self-affirming sense of purpose in life, one dedicated to individual self-realization.

As with Willis, the transgressive potential of travel was transfigured by romantic heroes as imaginative energy: a key sign of one's uniqueness was the observer's ability to be "inspired" by what one saw. As a reflection of a person's true inner nature and ability to escape his own limitations, this imaginative capacity had a compensatory psychological value: it was a sign of Godlike transcendent powers. In this way the assertions of romantic individuality were often an intrinsic and reaffirming claim of comparative superiority.

Fundamentally too, for romantics the insistence on authenticity reassured their belief in the emotional significance of their encounter with the exotic. It validated their belief that such experiences reflected an apprehension of a more profound sphere of meaning. Many like Taylor who had evolved high ambitions and yet felt thwarted by circumstance, and who for this reason abhorred the prevailing utilitarian and materialist values of society, wanted to believe that through the intense encounter with the foreign they had discovered something far more real than the false, deadened, and confining “work a day world” of life at home. Less mediated by the sort of false social constructs they believed dominated life at home, experience of the real world exposed the purer, nobler agent that lay buried inside of the individual.<sup>63</sup> For the young Taylor and romantics in general the problem of and alienation with the outside world was ultimately a crisis of imagination. The sublime revealed the real unity that lay beneath man’s divided consciousness. But the apprehension of that unity, far from being a passive experience, required the active engagement of individual imagination.

It was the imaginative faculty of man that invested the experience of nature with such revelatory potential. The German and High Romantics of England had assigned to the faculty of human imagination a critical redemptive role, replacing the one gradually being lost as the older theodicies were undermined by post-Enlightenment thought. Through the imagination one could overcome the preoccupations that fed the subjective/objective division plaguing consciousness. Paradoxically, the romantic believed the result would lead to the apprehension of one’s true individuality and simultaneously transcend the self, creating a cosmic reunification.<sup>64</sup>

### Strategies of Romantic Distinctiveness

Byron, Longfellow and Willis were all poets as well as travelers. During the early 1840s Taylor's sense of difference from others expressed itself in his pose first as a poet and then as a traveler. There was a widespread belief across American society that both activities could reflect attitudes outside the cultural mainstream. Indeed the two were closely linked in the popular imagination. Both involved links to the idea of self-discovery. In adopting the dual personas of poet and traveler, Taylor asserted a difference between himself and others that he affirmed by using various textual tactics, such as the poetics of sublimity and anti-tourism.

Taylor's poetry, beginning with the "The Soliloquy of a Young Poet" and then "The Dream of Fame" both in 1838, revealed his gradual embrace of this romantic doctrine. In an incomplete poem from this early period Taylor awkwardly strove to articulate the critical redemptive part he believed "imagination" played in life. The poem, "The Poet and the Singer," employed motifs similar to Wordsworth's autobiographical Prelude (not published until 1851). Indeed for Wordsworth the Prelude was a story about the simultaneous growth of the poet and reunification of the human spirit. In that work Wordsworth's travels acted as an allegory of what M. H. Abrams describes as the "birth, growth, disappearance, and resurrection of the imagination." Like Wordsworth, in "The Poet and the Singer" Taylor presents the imagination as a revitalizing spring. Its crystalline solvent distills the beauty, truth, and love that transcend earthly evils.<sup>65</sup>

For the romantics this quest for the inner self became a therapeutic alternative to the self-affirming social imperatives celebrated by mainstream liberal-republicanism and

sentimentality. The growing reorientation of Taylor toward the romantic position can be clearly seen in the poem “Manhood,” written a little over a year after his disheartened “Dream of Fame.” Taylor begins this poem in the same forlorn vein as before, expressing sorrow at the loss of childhood innocence and trampled ambition, but then the mood turns. “Boyhood has nearly passed,” Taylor wrote, and “I have wandered from the throng apart.” “Stronger, higher impulses prompt me now.” “I gaze, afar, on Manhood’s dusty plain” that God has made my “duty to flower.” I know that “trial wait in the future’s land” but “I am not afraid” for God has given “me a voice with which to join” in the fray. Taylor has begun to move beyond his uncertainties. Two themes in the poem appear to have caused the positive shift. Taylor’s description of having “wandered from the throng apart” conveys his belief that he has experienced a degree of self-revelation known to few others.<sup>66</sup>

This sort of romantic individuality typically expressed itself in a grotesque exaggeration or outright rejection of liberal-republican and genteel concerns, like the preoccupation with social ambitions, materialist values, as well as the constrained manners, rites, and sentiments of gentility. Each gesture of independence certified one’s uncommon and superior status as an “outsider.” Thus this private uniqueness was an explicitly comparative, oppositional, and public identity: an idea of self that depended upon a contrast with others.

What these early poems reveal is that before traveling to Europe in 1844 Taylor had begun to dabble in the romantic critique of materialist aspirations. Taylor cast individual and social acquisitiveness as an evil impeding the attainment of a higher, more important sphere of aspiration. In his lecture “America,” presented before the West

Chester Literary Society, the young man launched an attack against the valuation of materialism over inner merit.

There is a disposition too prevalent, especially in our large cities—to measure merit by the standard of wealth. Persons of wealth, though almost destitute of talent, and education, and perhaps with very questionable moral character, gain access too readily to what is termed the first-society. [...] Money by many is deemed the sole aim of life, and Humanity, Happiness, and virtue are too often sacrificed at its shrine.<sup>67</sup>

But Taylor's protest was the opposite of a call for the return to republican simplicity, or, for that matter, a pious demand for the shedding of the genteel trappings of refinement. Rather, in what would have been an anathema to these traditions, he de-emphasized the traditional ethos of work and suspicion of leisure.

Quoting Emerson, Taylor intoned approvingly that a “reverence [for] the good, and true, and the Beautiful” represented a purer, better way of life than straining for temporal success. Individual genius, at that time a commonly used term for imaginative distinctiveness, was the only true measure of men. Wealth actually impeded the realization of this inner quality. “This thirst for gain,” Taylor said, “is directly opposed to true and sterling greatness of mind.”<sup>68</sup>

Gentility itself had fostered a modest counter-weight to utilitarian and materialist values through its elevation of mental versus physical labor, as well as the appreciation of beauty, consumption, and leisure. Washington Irving had, for instance, given leisure a degree of respectability in the early 1820s through his genteel avatar Geoffrey Crayon. In stories like “The Mutability of Literature: A Colloquy in Westminster Abbey,” Irving had begun to soften the highly negative depiction of pleasure by lightening the judgmental undertone of words such as “loitering.” Irving suggested that “loitering” was an acceptable, even necessary facet of the genteel enterprise. It was a necessity for the

cultivation of sentiment and refinement, he said, a “luxury of wandering thought which one is apt to dignify with the name of reflection.”<sup>69</sup>

Lying in a West Chester field one afternoon in 1842 Taylor placed a more radical construction upon the notion of leisure. Gazing upwards he observed a majestic progression of clouds. His journal describes how his thoughts drifted to all those busy with “unmanly tasks” in the offices of the nearby town. These drones were “loitering and plodding [along] in their sordid pursuit, crushing out all the nobler impulses of the soul, never raising their eyes in admiration to the far wall of Heaven.” As Willis had when he praised the German romantics for not “loitering” over the “wretched perishing ambitions of money-getting and sense,” Taylor’s ruminations called into question the liberal capitalist definition of manliness.<sup>70</sup>

Taylor strikingly employed the term “loafing,” as others did during the period, to subvert common social conventions. Walt Whitman was one who wore the term as a badge of honor. By using it he was identifying himself with the “so-called loafers” that David Reynolds described as “mainly young working-class men and women who had been impelled by hard times to reject normal capitalist pursuits and find other means of gratification and amusement.”<sup>71</sup> Taylor’s thoughts bore interesting parallels to Whitman’s lines from the “Song of Myself”: “I loafe and invite my soul, / I lean and loafe at my easy observing a spear of summer grass.”<sup>72</sup> Years later Taylor recalled Whitman’s lines when grasping to express the delicious communion with nature and the supernatural made possible by the rejection of Puritan earnestness. “Peering down” from the vantage of a mountain top through the “pale, crystalline blue atmosphere” to the landscape below, you may experience that “delicious wandering of the imagination” that

“in the words of Walt Whitman, you ‘loaf, and invite your soul.’” For both Whitman and Taylor the word conveyed a romantic or poetic approach to life in radical opposition to commercial and utilitarian values of the age.<sup>73</sup>

The persona of the artist, author, and poet was perhaps the most dramatic embodiment of this oppositional inner self. Although he had begun to play with the construction of a romantic authorial persona as early as the late 1830s when he titled the notebook containing his short stories: “The Miscellaneous Productions of Bayard Taylor, Being A Series of Poetry and Tales Composed by that person, who styles himself Julius;” it was not until several years later that Taylor’s view of himself as a romantic artist began to take shape.<sup>74</sup> Around that time, after reading “‘Childe Harold,’ ‘Manfred,’ and ‘The Corsair,’” he explained through one of his autobiographical doubles, “the idea of writing something for publication came into my mind.” The poems “had turned the whole drift of my ideas into a channel of imagined song. To write some verses and have them printed would be joy—triumph—glory.”<sup>75</sup>

When “The Soliloquy of a Young Poet” appeared in 1841, for many Americans the Byronic poet had become a model of the romantic hero. The title of poet, like that of the loiterer, carried with it an invidious taint. In the mid-nineteenth century a shadow of suspicion still hung over poetry. Despite the advances gentility had made, the continuing influence of liberal-republican and Puritan calls for simplicity and utility continued to darken the name poet. “Poets, you know, are always dissipated, and finish with the poor house,” warned a “respectable businessman” of John Godfrey’s acquaintance. As we have seen earlier, in an effort to accommodate themselves to the pragmatic expectations of society, Taylor, Longfellow, and others sought to legitimate authorship, poetry, and

travel as utilitarian labor. Yet at the same time they exploited the reverse darker image of these figures: the alluring belief that they were governed by concerns beyond the proper.<sup>76</sup>

The poet, like the traveler, possessed a questionable public image in the United States because of his figurative, if not always literal, flirtation with the ornamental, the strange, the mysterious, and the potentially licentious. In the public imagination the close association of high culture with Europe brought the figures of the poet and traveler in close proximity. Byron, Longfellow, and Willis' careers solidified this impression.

The poet and traveler also shared a metaphoric association that Taylor described in his 1841 lecture on poets. Both were thought to share a similar unbounded, and therefore dangerous, spirit. A poet was a figure on an embattled journey towards self-realization: a voyage that takes the subject outside the boundaries of the normal, beyond the conventions of everyday life and material preoccupations, and towards apprehension of that inner self of intuition, emotion, and liberated imagination. In their own way each was an explorer of unknown and hidden places.<sup>77</sup>

Irving eloquently connected the two in his influential Sketch Book travel story "Stratford-on-Avon." Here Crayon ponders the life of Shakespeare. Standing above the grave of "the bard," Crayon experiences the artistic/historical sublime that yields an emotional clarity, of "absolute certainty," "no longer checked and thwarted by doubt." Emotionally liberated Crayon now doubles his freedom by shedding himself of tourist convention and wandering away from the "usual objects of pilgrim's devotion." The freedom of travel gave free flow to the latent imaginative and emotional powers that lay within the poet. Crayon realizes that Shakespeare's passage to poetry had begun with his

forced exile into vagabondage after being charged with poaching. Irving was offering Shakespeare as proof of a pivotal tenant of romantic philosophy: the belief that in order to grow, the individual needed to be taken out of their run-of-the-mill lives. Great art, for instance, required a degree of unconventionality and flirtation with moral danger. The rejection of caution and the embrace, in other words, of unbounded aspiration inspired originality.<sup>78</sup>

Both the poet and the romantic traveler flirted with risk in ways that ran afoul of the conservative neoclassicism of genteel culture. Notions of limitless aspiration, embodied in the artist's quest for the unattainable or more mundanely in the traveler's risky abandonment of the security of home, inverted the neoclassical virtue of reason and balance. The rash striving for unattainable goals placed character, as genteel moralists defined it, at risk because it loosened the restraints that protected the soul from corruption. This sort of romantic aspiration appeared to weaken other boundaries on individual expression by which the middle class hoped to re-establish order and hold back social chaos. For instance, the liberation of inner feeling weakened the doctrine of privacy. Indirectly, then, it struck at the larger systematic partitioning of life by gender and class that helped support the notion of privacy.

At fifteen, Margaret Fuller had already resigned herself to this quest for unattainable aspiration. To a friend she confided:

I feel the power of industry growing every day, and [...] the all-powerful motive of ambition [...] I have learned to believe that nothing, no! not perfection, is unattainable. I am determined on distinction, [...] the "success de societe,"—which, however, shall never content me.<sup>79</sup>

Many others felt this sense of romantic aspiration but were unable or unwilling to center their lives round it. Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, a Georgia diarist, is one example.

Thomas lived a quiet life of secret desire as the wife of a modestly successful Georgia planter. Circumscribed by her conventional gender roles, Thomas sought an outlet for her impulses in literature and travel narratives. Unable to live the life of her heroes—men like Byron, Napoleon, and Taylor himself—she longed to possess their romantic self-reliance and tireless pursuit of unattainable perfection. Her heroes seemed to possess a conviction in themselves that sustained them through all troubles. She wrote in her diary, “I wish I could echo Byron’s” self-confident and independent proclamation that: “What ever tide befall me, here’s a heart for any fate.”<sup>80</sup>

Another of her favorites was Tennyson. The historian Walter Houghton described Tennyson’s use of travel as an allegory for the philosophy of endless aspiration. In poems like “The Voyage” and “Ulysses,” Tennyson celebrated the “temper of heroic hearts [...] to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.”<sup>81</sup> In “Ulysses” Tennyson sang the praises of travel.

I cannot rest from travel; I will drink  
 life to the lees. All times I have enjoyed  
 Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those  
 that loved me, and alone; on shore, and when  
 Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades  
 Vexed the dim sea. I am become a name;  
 For always roaming with a hungry heart  
 Much have I seen and known---cities of men  
 And manners, climates, councils, governments,  
 Myself not least, but honored of them all---  
 And drunk delight of battle with my peers,  
 Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.  
 I am part of all that I have met;  
 Yet all experience is an arch where through  
 Gleams that untraveled world whose margin fades  
 Forever and forever when I move.  
 How dull it is to pause, to make an end,  
 To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!<sup>82</sup>

In later years Taylor delighted meeting and befriending Tennyson. For him and others like Thomas, though they felt boxed in by fate, they could turn to the romance of travel in order to live out their muted heroic sense of aspiration. Reading Thomas' diaries one senses that her love for travel narratives, which comprised a good portion of her reading, fed a feeling of self-growth and a secret self-importance, if not superiority, over the less adventurous.

I read and read books which [in the past] would have bored me terribly—I think and think boldly, I act—and act boldly as for example my going to [town] without a gentleman to escort [me]. I feel that my nature has expanded, my life has been ennobled and that today I am a matured woman, capable of a grasp of thought and appreciation of nature of which in those earlier years I could scarcely conceive.<sup>83</sup>

Indeed, Taylor's private belief in his own difference proved a compelling form of empowerment. When the first poem of his fictional double John appeared, Taylor, borrowing from his own experience, described a young man hardly able to prevent himself from cutting "a pigeon-wing on the pavement." The experience excited in John/Taylor a compensatory thrill. Where he said he had once passed before imposing offices of the town's prominent businessmen and felt inadequate, he now pitied those inside. He was "inclined to pity [these commercial elites] for being unconscious that the author of ["The Soliloquy of a Young Poet"] was at that moment passing [their] door."<sup>84</sup>

The moment demonstrates how the assertion of romantic distinctiveness bred a sense of superiority. Imagining himself a traveler, poet, or author possessed of extraordinary aspiration, imagination, and character, Taylor believed in his own superiority. "Was I not," Taylor had John ask of himself, "like Byron, not altogether made of such mean clay as rots into the souls of those whom I survey?"<sup>85</sup>

Margaret Fuller, like Taylor, turned to travel in order to proclaim the sense of inner meaning which others like Thomas kept confined to their diaries and private letters. In the early 1840s, already well established in Boston's literary circles and the onetime editor of the Dial, Fuller wished to broaden her horizons and establish her own authorial voice on the national literary stage. Unable to travel to Europe she toured the Midwest instead. The book that followed, Summer on the Lakes, was an idiosyncratically heterogeneous travel narrative; it included traditional description alongside fiction and poetry, among other things. Criticized at the time as "untidy," Fuller's stated goal was to give a "poetic impression of the country."<sup>86</sup> Although Fuller's Summer on the Lakes differed in style and depth from most—but not all—of Taylor's subsequent travel works, it shared with them the intended elaboration and legitimization of a romantic authorial identity. Her eclectic style worked to focus readers upon the true center of the text: the author herself.<sup>87</sup>

In content as well as style Fuller's objective in the book was to establish herself as an "outsider." One tactic she employed was to assume an authoritative voice as the objective observer. This strategy was hardly novel, dating back to the narratives of discovery and Enlightenment travel, where it symbolized the European's superiority over the native. What was different about Fuller and romantic travelers in general was a tactical reversal of perspective. Romantic travelers were less inclined to identify with the "normal" domestic culture from which they came. Instead they presented themselves as outsiders to that world. They did not abide by its conventions. Sometimes this meant identification with those they visited, and at other times a retreat into an oppositional stance that highlighted the author's individualism. Fuller alternated between the two.

Fuller implied her difference and originality in the first pages of her book.

Beginning at the most celebrated American travel destination of the nineteenth-century, Niagara Falls, Fuller's encounter differed in some key ways from sentimental expectations set by genteel travel texts. She cannot help, for instance, "feeling moved in the wrong place." Her emotions were not dictated by what others told her to feel, she was saying. She wished her "feelings" could be "entirely [her] own." While others gawk, repeat insipid sentiments, or look "at it a moment, with an air as if thinking how [they might] best appropriate it to [their] own use" before spitting "into it," Fuller's genuineness was rewarded with a true romantic moment of sublimity. "After a while," she wrote, the Falls "drew me into itself as to inspire an undefined dread, such as I never knew before, such as may be felt when death is about to usher us into a new existence."<sup>88</sup>

The travel scholar James Buzard pinpoints this textual maneuver in the discourse of anti-tourism. Buzard argues that as early as the second quarter of the century the growth of tourism had begun to make travel increasingly problematic as a means of establishing status. He sees the "anti-tourist" discourse that began to appear during the previous century as an effort to reconfigure the weakening code of exclusivity travel had once provided. He argued that romantics turned to drawing sharper distinctions between their internal experience of the world and that of other travelers.<sup>89</sup>

Buzard's argument must be qualified by the recognition that for the majority of educated and prosperous Americans genteel travel retained its capacity to serve as a marker of social distinction. Many were largely insensitive to the way sentimental travel formalism could be read as shallow, commercialized and thus commonplace. Anti-tourist language was drawn on by the incisive and disaffected. Nevertheless the two discourses

commonly coexisted in many texts. After all, the romantic sense of exclusiveness was an intensified version of sentimental distinction.

The successive volumes of James Fenimore Cooper's travels provide an example of the evolution of anti-tourist discourse in the writing of a single author. In Gleanings in Europe: Switzerland the reader begins to see the transformation of Cooper from the purely sentimental traveler of his early journals to the more knowing, discriminating, and occasionally romantic critic of the canned gentility of the middle-class tourist. Cooper insisted his intention was to avoid "the common-place accounts of common-place things."<sup>90</sup> In a letter to his wife just after its publication he scorned the clichéd sentiments offered by scribbling tourists. Orville Dewey, a clergyman who traveled to Europe for his health and then told his story in The Old World and the New, became the target of Cooper's disdain.<sup>91</sup> This preacher, Cooper mocked, wrote of "fine scenery like a Yankee meeting his mother after an absence of forty years—'Why! mother—is it you?'"<sup>92</sup>

During the next phase of his travels, Gleanings of Europe: Italy, Cooper advances with subtle textual assertions towards a romantic celebration of unique experience. He avoided the discussion of Italy's art galleries. That subject, he tells his readers, is "hackneyed." Instead he writes about the rural Italian landscape. Eager to assert the superiority of his view he again attacks previous writers' work. This time it was the 1827 book by Nathaniel Hazeltine Carter, a New England professor, Letters from Europe, that was the object of his scorn.<sup>93</sup> In the coming years Taylor used the device of an "outsider" in his travels and fiction in order to delineate character.<sup>94</sup>

The textual strategies of romantic travel literature spoke to the private desires of Americans across the United States. It crept into the otherwise genteel language of travel in readers as diverse in social status and regional culture as the unassuming plantation mistress Ella Thomas in Georgia, the Philadelphia gentleman Sidney George Fisher, the Vermont native and schoolmarm Julia Dyson, and the energetic Camden jack-of-all-trades Isaac Mickle, shared the empowering message of romantic travel. In the same way that gentility reached across geography and social boundaries to create a community of taste by as early as the 1830s, it can be said that the cult of inner distinctiveness and aspiration formed an increasingly important sub-culture. The shared values within this sub-culture reinforced the sense of selection felt by individual members.

This secret satisfaction that romantic authorship and travel could supply fueled the unprecedented popular interest in both poetry and tourism. Young men and women like Dyson, Andrew McFarland, and McDonald Clarke wished to emulate Byron's travels and/or take-up their own "literary schemes." Each used these activities to strengthen their private sense of self-importance and public profile. Dyson, for instance, burdened these endeavors with the hope that her undertakings would allow her "to enter those secret recesses of thought" and "feeling" known only to a few. Reversing the standard tactics to attain social belonging, Dyson used her "outsider" status as proof of being a romantic "insider."<sup>95</sup>

Taylor, for one, grew increasingly connected to and empowered by this community of romantic thought. The spread of romanticism through print meant that the outsider status he, Dyson, and others cultivated gradually provided a way to become social insiders. Following the publication of his first poem, Taylor learned that in the

growing print industry of the early 1840s writers were in short supply, especially ones willing to forgo their fees. Short lyric poetry, like Taylor's, not only had a ready audience but also conveniently filled excess space on newspaper and magazine pages. Within 18 months Taylor managed to place six more pieces in local papers, another three in the Philadelphia dailies, and had the pleasure of seeing them widely pirated.

His success allowed Taylor to interact with "kindred spirits" outside of Chester County. After his first few poems Taylor gained the confidence to write George R. Graham, owner of both the Saturday Evening Post and the most important new literary magazine of the day, Graham's Magazine.<sup>96</sup> Four months later he received a letter from Graham's new editor Rufus Wilmot Griswold who, Taylor gleefully reported, "requested me to contribute often and call on him when I came to town."<sup>97</sup> The young man had reasons to be happy. Griswold was a rising editorial star in publishing. Early in 1842 Griswold had published his enormously popular edited collection Poets and Poetry of America. Professionally he would be a "serviceable friend." But just as important, these men became a powerful emotional force in Taylor's life. For a young man who had previously felt isolated and had only a few like-minded friends with whom to communicate, the new connections were intensely meaningful.<sup>98</sup>

To Taylor these men held the keys to the larger world of which he had long dreamed. His interactions were flattering and frank. He asked for "advice in one or two things," he wrote Griswold, because "the opinion of a person occupying the station you do, would be of great weight with me."<sup>99</sup> "The favorable notices taken [by you] of a few of my effusions," he pandered to Willis, "had induced me to use greater efforts." He

went on confidentially, “I have in common with all bardlings, the cherished hopes of at least occupying a middling station among my country’s poets.”<sup>100</sup>

The emerging print industry of the 1830s, in which these men were key figures, played, as we have seen, a critical role in revolutionizing the values of middle-class culture. Through it the psychological and market driven social status advantages of romantic aspirations were being popularized. The degree to which print culture had already shaped public opinion can be seen in the response to Taylor’s poetry. Taylor, as he reveals through the autobiographical character John, discovered that although poetry was still eyed with suspicion by the public, writing it conferred a good bit of distinction. “I knew you must be a poet,” remarked one of John’s acquaintances, because “you have” a certain “expression” in your “eyes.” “There is something,” he continued, “about poets that distinguishes them from common people.” “My own thoughts!” said John to himself. The effect was evident across the whole of the local community, John told the reader. At first he was not sure the result “was an advantage to my reputation among the people.” However, once “the tidings that [he] wrote verses for the papers [...] spread through the neighborhood,” he noticed a marked change in people’s attitudes towards him.”

On one hand, they had little respect for any talent which did not take a practical direction; on the other, they vaguely felt that it was a certain sort of distinction. [...] The girls, I did not fail to observe, were much more impressed by the discovery than the young men.<sup>101</sup>

Thanks to the spread of gentility, public appreciation for the romantic pursuit of self-expression had indeed by the mid-1830s begrudgingly begun to be accepted as a sign of distinction by a much wider segment of the community. Americans engaged this romantic re-imagining of their lives in varying degrees. At the simplest it was enacted in

the fashion of Dyson, through the personal preferences of tastes and private dreams. For others, such as Whitman's loiterers and dandies, it extended to their public persona.

The rise of public interest in romantic travel reflected a profoundly important shift towards the celebration of individuality and aspiration in American culture. The cultural marketplace was then beginning, as it now does, to favor originality over other qualities. Taylor would ride this change to widespread popularity once the values that made him appear an outsider became markers of insider status. The growing appreciation of aspiration had slowly begun during these years to move the romantic outsiders from their place at the margin of society to their inclusion in the canon of character that composed "nature's aristocracy."

How the inclusion of exotic expressions of romantic individualism could complicate middle-class culture and elevate the status of those like Taylor can be seen in the influence that travelers had on popular dress at the time. The affectation of romantic and dandified dress was simply an attempt to achieve through other means what Hazlett said travel accomplished at: the transformation of one's old self for "another, and perhaps more enviable individual." Prior to the Civil War, after which the sober hues of bourgeois respectability became de rigueur, in some quarters men's dress displayed a boldness that culminated "in the flamboyant fifties." This turn to the drab colors was itself influenced by the fashion adopted by English romantics in the decades before the war. The influence of romantic style was evident as early as the turn-the-of-century. John Davis, an English traveler to the United States, recalled encountering an American Werther. He was a young man, Davis said, who "delighted in the perusal of The Sorrows of Werter [sic], perfumed his handkerchief with lavender, brushed his hat of a morning,

and went every Sunday to church.”<sup>102</sup> Young men during the 1820s began to affect the open collar and shaggy mien of Byron’s Harold. Isaac Mickle observed of Emerson after calling on “the lion” at his Philadelphia hotel in 1843 that the latter affected the romantic dress of the day: “tremendous big shirt-collar, something a la mode de Byron.”<sup>103</sup>

Whitman too cultivated his own romantically inspired idiosyncratic dress. When Bronson Alcott visited Whitman in 1856, David Reynolds writes, Whitman—in open-breasted red flannel shirt, striped calico jacket and coarse overalls—impressed him as more a “rough satyr” than a man.<sup>104</sup> Even in Chester County, Taylor was influenced by metropolitan trends. He wore the same turned down, broad collared, loose fittings shirts, and took great pride in his “flowing” shoulder length Byronic mane. He must have cut quite a figure in West Chester.<sup>105</sup>

It was no surprise that the nation’s most celebrated dandy, Willis, was also one of its most cosmopolitan. Willis strutted about Boston and New York in outlandish costumes, like the fictional Pelham after whom he was soon nicknamed, that curdled the blood of republican and Protestant advocates of simplicity. The Christian Examiner, sensing the revolutionary import of these gestures, fretted that the character of New England’s young men had “barely survived Byron” when the “mania” for “Mr[.] Pelham [Willis] with his nonchalant style of manners, his beautiful curls, and the gentlemanly scorn [...] seized a large class of young men, whom an evil star had cursed with leisure” (see appendix A for an illustration of Willis).<sup>106</sup>

The dress controversy surrounding Willis revealed the way romantic self-imagining could fundamentally reshaped basic criteria that middle-class culture used to assign identity and social status. For instance, once published, Pelham became “adopted

as a chap-book for dandies,” one recent scholar explained. The book almost “single-handedly changed the fashion in men’s coats from any-hued to black, thus introducing a sartorial style that would come to define (strangely enough) that most antidandaical of nineteenth-century creatures: the colorless bourgeoisie.”<sup>107</sup> The shift in fact was not so strange. As the culture market embraced the heroic formula of romantic individuality the everyday conventions of taste were gradually transformed to meet the new standard.

Of course the example of the change in the fashion of men’s coats was meant to illustrate something more substantial. As the historian Karen Halttunen has pointed out, by mid-century “the art of dress” had become “the art of projecting a particular personal style, and this new concept of style was increasingly confused with character itself.”<sup>108</sup> In other words, coats were simply the outer layer of a much deeper shift in the terms by which individual identity was defined. Character was being redefined as individuality, that is the qualities of the person—expressed in this instance through dress—which made them unique. Among the many implications this had was that beneath the sartorial choices made by Taylor and others, manhood itself had begun to take on a different dress. When the young Taylor affected the clothing of a poet, as surely as when he rejected the logic of “the workday world” or the necessity of restraint, or called into question the utilitarian and genteel notions of manhood, he was helping reshape middle-class values in ways that were advantageous to him.

The reaction of West Chester society to Taylor’s poetic ventures indicates the degree that the evolving appreciation of romantic aspiration helped spread and enhance Taylor’s name. Despite all “my precautions” to keep his publication of poetry in the paper secret, Taylor wrote to his friend, when it became known “I must confess that my

vanity [was] gratified.” “Like Byron,” he continued, “I woke up one morning and found myself famous.”<sup>109</sup>

### **Enacting the Romantic Persona in Europe**

Taylor’s desire to travel grew rather than diminished in the wake of these successes. “As the poetic element in my nature became predominant,” he later wrote, “I determined to procure better opportunities for education.” “I hungrily read all European works of travel, and my imagination clothed countries with a splendid atmosphere of poetry and art.”<sup>110</sup> Taylor imagined that the journey abroad would intensify the feelings of private and public empowerment poetry had given him. To Griswold, who was about to journey to Europe himself, the young man wrote,

You are going to perform what for years has been the most earnest wish of my heart. From early childhood I have had a strong, and unconquerable desire to visit Greece & Italy—to wander amid the ruins of their primal glory, and learn wisdom and humility among the wrecks of their grandeur and pride. Such is still the goal for which I am struggling—but I cannot hope for a long time yet, to accomplish it. But my letter is too long already, and I cut short the subject, for if I pursued it, it would be interminable.<sup>111</sup>

Taylor expected the experience to both deepen and widen his character. As we have seen, the journey dramatically enhanced his claims of gentility. It also provided a richer scene against which to craft his romantic distinctiveness.

Romantic aspiration, however, had the effect at times of spurring flight from daily life. As Taylor’s poems garnered him public acclaim in Chester County they subtly undermined his view of himself as superior. Just as failure reflected genuineness and hence merit, success conveyed an inauthentic and hence imitative imagination. The romantic persona was, after all, grounded upon opposition.<sup>112</sup>

The embattled tone of Taylor's personal recollections grew in 1843 and 1844 while he worked as a typesetter at the Village Record. All around him he saw obstacles that he must overcome. His sense of isolation grew more omnipresent. His soul, he later wrote, "felt itself hemmed in on all sides by the entire want of sympathy and encouragement."<sup>113</sup> What he wanted most was to escape. In his diary on January 29<sup>th</sup> 1844 he wrote, "Again in this hateful office—when will I get out of it? As soon as I possibly can. Oh! that I were at the foot of Mt. Blanc, or on the summit of Parnassus!" The promise of freedom he associated with travel became more focused after his cousin Frank left in 1843 to study in Europe. "I have been thinking of Europe all day," he wrote on another day, "and am sure, that with great exertion I can join Frank in a little more than a year. [...] God grant that it may be so! I cannot rest till I have gone." "I felt," he later remembered of the period, "as if I were sitting in a vacuum while the air, which should nourish my spiritual life could only be found in distant countries."<sup>114</sup>

Opposition directed at his plans came to represent all the troubles he faced in fulfilling of his larger dreams. Friends and family expressed concern. He dismissed their objections in his diary: "Let them," think whatever they want about the journey, he exclaimed, "they cannot stop me."<sup>115</sup> "The project," Taylor wrote in Views, "was opposed by my friends as something utterly visionary and impractical."<sup>116</sup> Years later he said, "My enthusiasm on the subject was considered little short of madness."<sup>117</sup>

The want of support Taylor perceived was as much imagined as real. Although his project to travel to Europe was certainly bold it was not, as we have learned, that unusual, let alone the stuff of "madness." In fact Taylor's desire for travel was readily comprehensible to many of his family and peers. Naturally encumbered by their Quaker-

born reticence and protective love, they could muster only faint support for his plan; they did not, however, block it. Indeed, he had little trouble finding encouragement for his scheme. To Phillips he wrote, "I find that our trip is everywhere looked on approvingly—many have expressed the strongest desire to accompany us."<sup>118</sup> Despite this he wrote to Phillips on another occasion: "though they did not say so [...] I could plainly see [...] how opposed they were to my going to Europe." Looking over his comments on the subject it appeared that Taylor exaggerated the hostility to his travels.<sup>119</sup>

He similarly inflated the emotional trial of deciding to go. Curiously, for a young man who had dreamed so long about traveling abroad and evinced so much dislike for his current circumstances, carrying through his plan prompted an enormous psychological battle. Without a doubt in the young man's mind his leaving signaled an important, and undoubtedly traumatizing, break with the world he had known as a child. It was to him a rite of passage that meant the loss of much of what he loved. But it also meant the realization of much more. So one must wonder about the intensity of the anguish he claimed to have felt. To a friend he poured-out the emotional account of his trial:

When I left you last [...] I experienced as severe a mental struggle as I ever felt. It is one of these few which happen in the life of almost every one. It seemed to be an era in my life when I must decide on my after-destiny; it was a crisis, which I seemed instinctively to feel was either to carry me on to that station in the hearts of men which is my highest ambition, or to condemn me to a life of obscurity and spiritlessness. [...] I know by my mother's voice the anxiety with which she looked upon [the trip], and the opposition of many of my friends, my absence from Mary; on the other hand, the aspiration of my childhood, the dream of my youth. Italy! and Greece! the wild enthusiasm with which I should tread those lands, and view the shrines 'where young Romance and Love like sister pilgrims turn;' the glorious emotions of my soul, and the inspiration I should draw from them. [...] My words are cold and tame compared with my burning thoughts. But I wander. The struggle within me was great. In spite of all my endeavors, tears, which I had not shed for years, rushed to my eyes, and I wept like a child. My feelings had been too highly wrought up. I could not bear to give my parents pain, and it almost seemed to me like relinquishing life to relinquish my glorious

dream of the Old World. [...] I sat down by the roadside, for it was then dark, and looking to heaven through my blinding tears fervently prayed for strength of spirit to sustain me in my conflict with the world. And the struggle in my breast ceased, and I felt that the path which was to lead me onward and upward was that which was the desire of my soul.<sup>120</sup>

Taylor's feelings of emotional strife and his exaggeration of opposition served an important purpose. As many others did, Taylor used this danger as a plot device in the romantic narrative he was constructing for his life. He began to crystallize an embattled identity around his resolve to go. The opposition from others was the great obstacle that he must heroically overcome. For Taylor the possibilities promised by travel and his belief in his romantic destiny fed upon the impossibility with which others viewed the dream. "My desire to visit Europe," he confirmed, "grew with the difficulties that stood in my path."<sup>121</sup>

Taylor embellished this sense of individual purpose with a larger argument of cosmic necessity. We are not placed on earth to enjoy a life of "plodding ease," he wrote in a poem from 1843. No, the challenges we face are meant to make us stronger, to "awake" our "slumbering soul!" and clarify the hidden "aim" of our existence. Once we apprehend it, duty requires that we "dream no more / Within the drowsy by-ways of the world / But join the scanty band on its broad field, Who sow in tears the germs of noble deeds."<sup>122</sup>

In this poem, aptly titled "The Duty of Man," Taylor renounced the uncertainty and feeling of inadequacy in attaining worldly successes he had been struggling with the previous years. When "the vain" and "hollow mockery of worldly wealth can buy not life" we must sustain ourselves by gathering the meager "fruit" that the world gives and know that in doing so, "heedless of the rude, world's scorn" we have done our "duty to

God and man!” Be satisfied, he proclaimed, that you have raised yourself closer to “a higher, loftier sphere.” Appropriately the poem first appeared in the pages of “The Anti-Slavery Standard,” an indication of how Taylor’s acute longings dovetailed with the other movements at the time that sought to find a larger moral purpose in life. Taylor imagined that his mission in life was to pursue a goal much nobler than “worldly wealth.”<sup>123</sup>

Between mid-1843 and July 1844, as his sense of how important travel would be for him grew, Taylor used his contacts in the literary world to advance his plans. Griswold encouraged the publication of the collection of Taylor’s poems entitled Ximena. Taylor sold subscriptions to Chester County residents, which provided the money to buy back his remaining years as an apprentice.<sup>124</sup> But he had additional designs in bringing out the book. To Willis he wrote, “The idea struck me that by so doing I might, if [the poems] should be favorably noticed, obtain a newspaper correspondence which would enable me to take the start.” Willis had, of course, inspired the plan. Now he strengthened Taylor’s resolve, furnishing letters of introduction and “hearty encouragement.”<sup>125</sup>

From the outset the figure Taylor cuts in his letters goes beyond the disciplined and sentimental traveler. Interwoven with the other persona was the romantic hero. Time and again his narrative seeks to distinguish him from the common herd by showing his uniqueness. Writing to his mother after half a year in Europe, Taylor attempted to explain the nature of the tremendous impact the experience had already had upon him.

One can know nothing of a country from the outside. What a world of traveler’s prejudices have I read [...] We could not have learned in two years, in fact we never could have learned to feel as we now do, though it is but six months since we left home. The principle advantage it has been to us I could scarcely make you understand, since it is only evident to ourselves as yet. I mean its effect on the mind, which has been as surprising as it is sudden. Thought seems to have

taken a sudden growth, fetters of which we were not before aware have been broken, and we are continually surprised in what a broader light many subjects are presenting themselves.<sup>126</sup>

Several themes evident in this passage demonstrate the difference between the romantic and sentimental interpretation of exotic scenes. One was an emphasis upon intensity. For the romantic, emotional encounters like this had transfiguring or even revelatory potential. Another was the veracity of the experience. Taylor witnessed here an “unfettered” reality, not a false representation of it by another writer. A third was the role that individual imagination had in the encounter. It is clear that Taylor believed his own imaginative powers, his “presentments,” were critical to the overall impact of scenes. Moreover he believed his response had less to do with the genteel lessons of how to feel, the sort of thing that constituted the “traveler’s prejudices,” than it did with something innate or intuitive within him.

And yet by the mid-1840s rhetorical tactics like this had become more difficult. By then the spread of the romantic ideal within the cultural marketplace, had made use of the romantic idiom increasingly common. As the great romantic conceit of unscripted experience became stale it was exposed as another convention. Byronic sentiments had become so common, that in 1846 Charles Dickens mocked the crafty use of “Milor Beeron,” as they said, by crafty cicerones to flatter their patrons. Years later the American sculptor William Wetmore Story chuckled at the “tourist’s” obsession with Byron in his own Italian travel narrative Roba di Roma. All three were using humor to distance themselves—just as romantics had themselves done with callow sentiment—from the “falseness” of an overripe romanticism. The literary critic James Buzard astutely observed that some had begun to suspect the vaunted Byronic pose had become

another form of conventionality. Popularity had made Byronic passion passé. Would-be romantics had to devise more cunning ploys to create privately and publicly a genuine feeling of uniqueness.<sup>127</sup>

When writing his letters between 1844 and 1846 Taylor strove to achieve a romantic effect by utilizing anti-tourist strategies. To tourists the landscape of the Cheviots appears as “bleak and uninteresting,” Taylor declared. Yet “to me,” he asserted, “the scenery was of a character of beauty entirely original.” Repeatedly Taylor asserted his difference from imitative sentimental tourists. Floating down the Rhine, observing the landscape around Coblenz, he confides:

Every place was familiar to me in memory, and they seemed like friends I had long communed with in spirit and now met face to face. The English tourists, with whom the deck was covered, seemed interested too, but in a different manner. With Murray’s Handbook open in their hands, they sat and read about the very towns and towers they were passing, scarcely lifting their eyes to the real scenes, except now and then, to observe that it was “very nice.”

He was familiar with what he saw but not a slave to the opinion of others. With democratic even-handedness, he did not spare the rich. They too lacked the true qualities that would make them one of “nature’s aristocrats.” Dulled by wealth and sensuality, most elites were torpid parasites with shallow tastes, Taylor implied.

I was somewhat amused with seeing a splendid carriage with footmen and outriders, crossing the mountain, the glorious landscape full in view, and the richly dressed lady within lying fast asleep!

As tourists, rather than travelers, their interest in scenery and culture was more pose than passion.<sup>128</sup>

Both the sentimental and fashionable elite he depicted possessed the tourist’s great flaw of preferring muted sensations, filtered through second hand experience, to the real world. In a scene similar to the one above, Taylor told the story of a sleeping

English gentleman and lady in a carriage amidst the Alps. Behind the two sat “an artist, sketching away with all his might.” When asked “the reason for his industry” he replied “Oh! my lord wishes to see every night what he has passed during the day, and so I sketch as we go along!” Tourists missed what mattered most: the authentic experience that no sketches or travel guide could ever convey.<sup>129</sup>

One strategy for projecting the image of authenticity was to reject the overwrought fancy that frequently accompanied the sentimental. Taylor encountered this approach in Cooper. He bolstered the value and authenticity of his experiences by leveling an attack against Byron, the archetype romantic traveler. Cooper described the travels of this seminal romantic hero as the:

vapid [...] exhibition of gross affectations, puerilities, caprices and morbid vanity: Duels in which no blood is shed, hair-breadth escapes and adventures in countries that are every day travelled without hazard, and the opinions of a traveller of twenty two who has seen Portugal, the South east corner of Spain, Malta, Sardinia, Sicily and a part of Greece! And this he calls some knowledge of Europe, Asia, and Africa.<sup>130</sup>

Taylor too maintained some distance from Byron in Views. At one point he superiorly judges that poet’s writings “ludicrous.”<sup>131</sup>

Taylor countered this problem in Views by projecting an image of an individual both cursed and gifted with uncommon feeling. Unlike the tragic Byronic heroes he did not succumb to this burden and fall into morbid self-pity or pointless flight from life. Nor does he suffocate his true self through the pursuit of materialism or adherence to conventionality demanded by others. Instead Taylor presented himself manfully shouldering the burden. He opened his heart to a potentially hostile world but he did not let the torrid emotions that lay in his heart to consume him. In Views Taylor indirectly expressed beliefs that we recognize from his early poetry: first, men had a duty to pursue

their hearts' desire, no matter the cost, as part of God's moral design; second, that this dual act of resignation and overcoming revealed his true, noble nature. They must do so at whatever risk to their social, psychological and emotional well being.

One reviewer detected this implicit claim. Endorsing it, the author applauded Taylor as a man who has learned:

a directness of mind [...] as enables a man to form his purpose, and carry it forthright into action; [...] a sufficient independence and self-feeling to know clearly what his own impressions are [...] [although] he doubtless had the cold comfort of finding [his plans] esteemed the most ridiculous enterprise in the world. He saw that [...] though it must be done with toil and trouble, with humility and self-denial, and with a brave contempt for [...] social obstacles [...] he was confident that he should be overpaid for his efforts and privations by the satisfaction and improvement which the pilgrimage would bring. [...] Without knowing any thing of Mr. Taylor except from his book, we apprehend that he has made this discovery; or perhaps, as the Transcendentalists would say, he has it by revelation in his nature.

The reviewer saw the persona Taylor projected in Views as an expression of the author's "revealed" inner nature. By enduring the trials involved in the realization of his true self, the reviewer believed Taylor had performed a duty for the society as a whole. The lessons imparted by this book, he wrote, put "the community [...] under a great obligation to Mr. Taylor" because he was a hero who confronted his own fears.<sup>132</sup>

Taylor's first sight of Europe, the mountain Ben Lomond that Scott had shrouded with myth, left him gripped by anxiety. The encounter sent Taylor into a typical example of the disorientation felt by romantic travelers.

Ben Lomond [stood] blue in the dim distance, the first herald of the romantic land we approach! Now that we are so near the Old World, I feel a kind of fear, that I cannot at first realize my situation. I have so long and ardently wished to visit the scenes hallowed by the spirit of many a mighty bard, or consecrated by noble deeds, [...] acts of tyranny, or crime [...] that now, when I behold them, I fear I cannot reconcile the real with the ideal. The anticipation has been so like reality that the reality may seem as dream-like and vague.<sup>133</sup>

But such confrontations served a purpose. He experienced a sublime epiphany, or totalizing apprehension of nature and history in all their infinite glory. Taylor's first "sublime vision" of the Alps offers another example.

There was no mistaking those snowy mountains. The heart bounded with a sudden thrill of rapturous excitement [...] [and they] called up images blended with the grandest events in world history. I thought of the glorious spirits who have looked upon them and trodden their rugged sides—of the storms in which they veil their countenances, and the avalanches they hurl thundering to the valley—of the voices of great deeds, which have echoed from their crags over the wide earth—and of the ages which have broken, like the waves of a might sea, upon their everlasting summits! <sup>134</sup>

According to romantic convention the intensity of the sublime overwhelmed normal faculties of human understanding. In the process the sublime exposed the observer's true inner nature. As the encounter with Europe brought Taylor's ideal vision into accord with the real world a stronger, more confident, sense of self emerged. Because these encounters purported to reveal one's true inner nature, romantics stressed the theme of truthfulness of their experience even more than the moral advocates of gentility emphasized the idea of sincerity.

Margaret Fuller too set out for Europe to craft a distinctive persona. After her travels in the Midwest, Fuller had taken the job of literary editor and journalist at the New-York Daily Tribune—a rare accomplishment at the time—and published her Woman in the Nineteenth Century. She had also, however, been jilted by a manipulative lover and ground down by her journalist duties. Fuller had turned to poetry in an attempt to assuage a still unsatisfied longing for wholeness and harmony. It is fair to say that despite all her success Fuller felt a good deal like the meditative "traveler" she had invented in The Summer on the Lake, doomed to wander forever in search of something he did not quite understand. "What is it I do seek?" he asked. What is it that drives me

with “insatiable desire?” In a vague way he knew the answer. “Sometimes it is something I have lost,” he continued, “Sometimes it is a spirit yet unknown.”<sup>135</sup>

This was the trial faced by romantic heroes. The stage was set for her to go to Europe. There she could enact a drama of self-realization that would be both psychologically satisfying and marketable. The personal would be made public in the same way as Taylor: Fuller paid for her trip by sending back letters to the Tribune. Indeed during the first year Taylor’s and Fuller’s letters appeared side-by-side. Fuller was not disappointed. She found her accomplishments widely appreciated and her range of opportunity vastly improved. To Emerson she wrote:

I find myself much in my element in European society. It does not, indeed, come up to my ideal; but so many of the encumbrances are cleared away that used to weary me in America, that I can enjoy a freer play of faculty, and feel, if not like a bird in the air, at least as easy as a fish in water.<sup>136</sup>

Liberated, she began to reshape her life around previously suppressed passions. Her subject of romantic attachment was not the landscape but the convulsive political geography of Italy. Her letters reveal a gradual identification with the revolutionary movements then sweeping Europe. Falling in with revolutionaries in Italy whose passion for nation building became a surrogate for her own construction of a powerful public identity, Fuller turned her Tribune letters into outspoken calls for political and social change. By assuming their cause she found a profoundly important sense of individual meaning and a complementary public voice as a serious commentator on political issues. In 1847 she fell in love with Marchese Giovanni Angelo d'Ossoli, a much younger man of petty nobility and a fellow revolutionary. They had a child a year later, a son named Angelo. It is believed they married in 1848. When Rome was under siege by the French forces in 1848, Fuller assumed charge of one of the hospitals of the city. Her husband

participated in the fighting. Her marriage to a revolutionary solidified the link between this public and her private “feminine” self. The birth of their child was emblematic of the fecund possibilities this psychological union portended.

In order to serve his own ends Taylor of course did not have to construct such a union, only nudge the parameters of masculine behavior to include feeling and imagination. He could still rely upon the qualities abrogated to men—ideas of civic duty, heroism, and self-determination—to convince himself and his audience of the nobility in the textual identity he projected. This more limited task Taylor accomplished with great success in the eyes of the reading public and the cultural elite.

### **Conclusion**

Margaret Fuller never had the opportunity to test the reception of her newfound identity. She drowned with her family in 1850 when her returning ship foundered off Fire Island, New York. To cover the event, the Tribune dispatched Taylor, who had in the interim years become a reporter for her old paper. Taylor gathered from the survivors what news he could of Fuller’s last hours and combed the coast in search of her lost manuscript on the Italian revolution. At the end of his reports Taylor paused to pay tribute to a woman there is no evidence he ever met but whom he recognized as a fellow romantic. For him, the last years of her life stood-out. She had “thrown her whole soul into” her experience in Italy, he wrote. No mere “observer,” she had become “a partaker in the gallant though unsuccessful struggle [...] the intimate friend and compatriot” of Revolutionary leaders. She had given her life to a cause that “redeemed the name of Rome from the long rust of sloth, servility, and cowardice.” Reading her letters of those

events, he later wrote, one felt oneself in the midst “of grand and melancholy events,” and “this fact is itself the highest praise that could be bestowed upon the writer.”<sup>137</sup>

Taylor believed that he and Fuller had had authentic experiences in Europe. Both had taken risks that few others were willing to take for the realization of inner selves. Years later he pointed to his penniless days in London as proof of his point.

Successful authors in their libraries, seated in cushioned chairs and dipping their pens into silver inkstands, may write about money with beautiful scorn, and chant the praise of Poverty [...] but there is no condition in which the Real is so utterly at variance with the Ideal, as to be actually out of money, and hungry, with nothing to pawn and no friend to borrow from.<sup>138</sup>

Far from a rejection of ideality, Taylor means to suggest that because of his trials few can come as close as he to grasping the higher truth that lies hidden behind experience. The sheltered lives of other authors made them unfit to claim to comprehend the ideal.

Taylor and Fuller were very different people, and these differences make them complimentary examples of the broader trend of which they were a part. Each turned to the imagination and travel out of frustration. And they used both to celebrate their individuality. Taylor did so because they offered a way to reconcile his ambition with the realities of his life. Fuller did so because travel and the encounter with foreign gave her an opportunity to enter the public sphere. Psychologically, too, both Taylor and Fuller shared the use of the romantic as an escape from the crushing demand of expectations. By elevating feeling, intuition, imagination, as a competing sites of human value they could measure themselves against a different sort of standard than those favored by the rest of society and against which they had little chance of success. Like Ella Thomas, Julia Parker, Isaac Mickle, Andrew McFarland, and many others, Taylor and Fuller turned to the use of international settings to enact this romantic sense of self.

<sup>1</sup> Bayard Taylor, At Home and Abroad, 1<sup>st</sup> series (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1859), 40.

<sup>2</sup> Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune: Related by Himself, A Story of American Life (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1864), 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks, ed. William H. Gilman et al. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960-present), 5: 331-32.

<sup>4</sup> Bayard Taylor, scrapbook "Poems and Diary," 25 July 1843, item 33, Box 12, Bayard Taylor Papers [hereafter cited as BTP], Cornell University Special Collections, Ithaca, New York [hereafter cited as CUSC].

<sup>5</sup> Other intellectual developments contributed to this rise of skeptical thought. The spreading influence of Higher Criticism in biblical interpretation, a movement that questioned the theory of Christianity as a system of revealed truth, was one.

<sup>6</sup> Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune, 32, 39.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 6. Taylor had quickly learned he did not enjoy teaching and the occupation promised neither the financial return nor the social prestige he desired.

<sup>8</sup> Bayard Taylor, "Philosophy of Travel," Lecture File, Bayard Taylor Collection [hereafter cited as BTC], Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pennsylvania [hereafter cited as CCHS].

<sup>9</sup> Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune, 24.

<sup>10</sup> Taylor, Joseph and His Friend: A Story of Pennsylvania (New York: G. P. Putnam's & Sons, 1870), 26.

<sup>11</sup> The Letters of Margaret Fuller, ed. Robert N. Hudspeth, 6 vol. (Ithaca, 1983-1994), 1:179-172.

"'Intelligency' was nothing to it," she continued, "A 'Supercilious,' 'satirical,' 'affected,' 'pedantic' 'Syren!'"

<sup>12</sup> Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune, 135.

<sup>13</sup> See February 26, March 3, 25, passages from Taylor, "Diary of 1842," item 42, Box 12, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>14</sup> Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune, 39. When asked to read a poem before an association created by the schools best students, Taylor had no sooner begun than was "asked to stop as members were getting tired of it." I was, he continued, "rather astonished but had to comply." Sighting the failure of "profits" to "meet expenses" he quit teaching that day. To Taylor his peers lacked imagination.

<sup>15</sup> Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune, 60.

<sup>16</sup> Taylor to John B. Phillips, 17 June 1843, File Taylor to H-Y, Box 6, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>17</sup> Taylor, "Diary of 1842."

<sup>18</sup> He saw this in the boys of his school many of whom by the fortune of having prosperous parents would do well in the future despite their lack of merit.

<sup>19</sup> See chapter two of Anne C. Rose, Victorian American and the Civil War (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>20</sup> Isaac Mickle, A Gentleman of Much Promise: the diary of Isaac Mickle, 1837-1845 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977). The troubles that Mickle faced later in life are not clear. Philip Mackey speculates that it may have involved intemperance or some other improper behavior. Whatever the effect, the cause appears to have been a convergence of responsibilities and expectations.

<sup>21</sup> Margaret Fuller to [?], n.d., The Letters of Margaret Fuller, ed. Robert N. Hudspeth, 6 vols. (Ithaca, 1983-1994), 6:143-144.

<sup>22</sup> Margaret Fuller, Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli, ed. R. W. Emerson, W. H. Channing, and J. E. Clarke, 2 vols. (Boston, 1852), 1:229. Fuller's obstacle, her womanhood, was in a society where the public-sphere was restricted largely to men, a far more difficult to surmount and offers a good parallel to Taylor's struggle to find an effective social and satisfying personal sense of worth.

<sup>23</sup> West Chester Jeffersonian, 1 October 1842. This poem was later included in Taylor, Ximena; or, The battle of the Sierra Morena, and other poems (Philadelphia: H. Hooker, 1844).

<sup>24</sup> Taylor, "Diary of 1842," February 7, 26.

<sup>25</sup> Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune, 157-158.

<sup>26</sup> Bayard Taylor, scrapbook "Poems of 1840-1843," item 33, Box 12, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>27</sup> Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune, 81.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>29</sup> Taylor, "Diary 1842," January 23. See this diary for examples of his reading of Dick and other natural Christian philosophers.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Carlyle, Sartor Resartus: The Life and Opinions of Herr Tenfeldsdröckh (New York: University of California Press, 2000 [1831]), 125-126,

<sup>31</sup> For more on the Romantic literary movement's attempt to reinsert God into mechanical universe of the late eighteenth century see M. H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature (New York: Norton and Co., 1971).

<sup>32</sup> See William J. Astore, Observing God: Thomas Dick, evangelicalism, and popular science in Victorian Britain and America (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2001), 12.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Karen Halttunen, Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 19.

<sup>34</sup> Emerson, The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks, 5: 331-32.

<sup>35</sup> Taylor, Ximena. The relevant stanza: "Purer thoughts / Come back like guardian spirits and made glade / Their earthly home / He went into the world / Not now for fame, but true and humble deeds."

<sup>36</sup> "Notes While Preparing Sketch Book &C. 1817," in Washington Irving, Journals and Notebooks, 1807-1822, 2 vols., ed. Walter A. Reichart and Lillian Schlissel (Boston: Twayne, 1981), 2:199. Signs of this shift towards the Byronic ideal, and the generational division it marks, were evident in Irving and Cooper, America's best-known writers and travelers in the years before 1840. Both authors drifted between the genteel, sentimental, and romantic modes in their stories and travels. That being said, their commitment to this version of the romantic was not complete. They were unable to fully embrace the notion of the ideal/imaginative as source of final meaning. Through most of his career, for example, Irving battled with himself about the value of imagination. In one place he suggested poetry is all "delusion" and "airy nothings," a "necromantic" act that brings a dead world to life. Elsewhere he explicitly rejects the embrace of intense feeling central to the romantic, vowing not to write in his travels about the "morbid sentiments" that occupy others. These comments are placed in the mouth of Crayon after his visit to the grave of Shakespeare. I will discuss this scene further in a section below.

<sup>37</sup> William Hazlitt, Table-Talk, or, Original Essays (New York: Chelsea House, 1983), 260-261.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Bayard Taylor, "Autobiography," item 22, Box 7, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>40</sup> Comment of Byron's publisher is quoted in Thomas N. Baker, Sentiment & Celebrity: Nathaniel Parker Willis and the Trials of Literary Fame (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 14.

<sup>41</sup> Byron's influence helped nudge poetry in America away from its traditional emphasis on the religious or didactic topics, and the expectation shared between them that language ought to be employed purely as a referential and informative tool. He focused more narrowly around consciousness. In this sense his travels were secular allegorical journeys of personal introspection. On the general influence of Byron see Andrew Elfenbein, Byron and the Victorians (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), and Keith Walker, Byron's Readers: a study of attitudes towards Byron (Salzburg: Inst. f. Anglistik u. Amerikanistik, University of Salzburg, 1979).

<sup>42</sup> "Review of Child Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto 4, By Lord Byron," Quarterly Review, 19 (1818): 215-232.

<sup>43</sup> Taylor's 1842 diary made several references to his reading of Byron while pursuing his geographical self-study program.

<sup>44</sup> For a discussion about Byron and the use of his works as guides see James Buzard, The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways of 'Culture': 1800-1918 (New York: Clarendon Press, 1993), 119-120.

<sup>45</sup> George Henry Calvert, Autobiographic Study (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1885), 124. Also see his First Years in Europe (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1866).

<sup>46</sup> On Byron's influence of Thomas Cole see Alan P. Wallach, "Cole, Byron, and the Course of Empire," The Art Bulletin 50 (1968): 375-79. Also see Joy S. Kasson, Artistic Voyagers: Europe and the American Imagination in the Works of Irving, Allston, Cole, Cooper, and Hawthorne (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982).

<sup>47</sup> Benjamin Moran, The Footpath and Highway: or, Wanderings of an American in Great Britain in 1851 and '52 (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1853), 70-73.

<sup>48</sup> Andrew McFarland, M. D., The Escape, or, Loiterings amid the Scenes of Song and Story (Boston: Mussey, 1851), 61.

<sup>49</sup> Bayard Taylor, Views A-Foot; or, Europe seen with a Knapack and Staff, with a preface by N. P. Willis, 9<sup>th</sup> edition (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1850), 37.

<sup>50</sup> Samuel Goodrich, Recollections of a Lifetime; or, Men and things I have seen; in a series of familiar letters to a friend, historical, biographical, anecdotal, and descriptive, 2 vols. (Detroit, Gale Research Col, 1967), 2:103-107.

<sup>51</sup> Julia Dyson, Life and Thoughts (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen, Hafflefinger & Company, 1871), 24 July 1841.

<sup>52</sup> McDonald Clark, Life and Thoughts, edited by Miss E. Latimer (Boston: Whittemore, Niles, and Hall, 1856).

<sup>53</sup> On Byron's working-class following in England see Elfenbein, Byron and the Victorians, 62-67. Originally published in the United States as Abbotsford and Newstead Abbey, number 2 of The Crayon Miscellany (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1835).

<sup>54</sup> Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Outre-Mer: A Pilgrimage Beyond the Sea (New York: Harper, 1835), 7.

<sup>55</sup> Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Hyperion, A Romance (New York: S. Colman, 1839), 2-5. Though a popular book Longfellow's evasive narrative limited the appeal of Outre-Mer. The shifting point of perspective undercut the bold centrality of the hero or pilgrim's confrontation with life (a critical philosophical article of romanticism). Longfellow corrected this flaw in his 1839 Hyperion. "Both in person and character [Flemming] resembled Harold, the Fair-Hair of Norway," Longfellow wrote, "the young chief so proud of his flowing locks; he who spent his mornings among the young maidens." Readers were told that Flemming was both the Byronic Harold and the masculine Harold of Nordic saga. Pained by love but more deeply by his fervid imagination, Flemming was the unflinching, bold poet hero.

<sup>56</sup> Taylor, Views, Preface, xi.

<sup>57</sup> Recalled by J. T. Fields after Taylor's death, see New York Tribune, 24 December 1878.

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Albert H. Smyth, Bayard Taylor (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1896), 296.

<sup>59</sup> Nathaniel Parker Willis to John Bleeker Van Schaick, 29 Boston 1828, Simon Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.

<sup>60</sup> "I find but a few among the students," he wrote during his first year at college, "whom I should choose as companion" because of their lack of "piety" as well as "refinement either of manner or feeling." Quoted in Thomas N. Baker, Sentiment & Celebrity: Nathaniel Parker Willis and the Trials of Literary Fame (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 25.

<sup>61</sup> The traveler, Taylor later quoted Willis saying, can only give "you the picture produced in their brain by what they see" otherwise the world they describe and the person they project in doing so, would look "like a pawnbroker's shop, where each traveler wears the cast off clothes of others." Taylor, Views, 71.

<sup>62</sup> Members of this generation were more willing to embrace the romantic than either Irving or Cooper. As a result many young Americans were also more willing during the late 1830s and early 1840s, while struggling to find their place in society, to identify with characters like Harold and Flemming, in ways in which they did not with Irving's sensitive, diffidently genteel Crayon or the bumptious self-made persona Cooper projected in his travels.

<sup>63</sup> On the theme of authenticity see Lionel Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971).

<sup>64</sup> For a discussion of the theodic meaning of romantic striving see M. H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1971).

<sup>65</sup> Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism, 118.

<sup>66</sup> Taylor, Ximena, 63-64.

<sup>67</sup> Bayard Taylor, "America," Lecture Box, BTC, CCHS. Taylor's response to this unacceptable state of moral confusion was to turn to the readily available traditional Protestant and republican suspicion of worldliness. Both, as we have seen, offered the basis to attack the terms of self-definition and self-worth promoted by economic and social standards of middle class society. Both, indeed, had become a standard episode in evangelical conversion narratives.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. He added this poem in the lecture: "Purer thoughts / Come back like guardian spirits and made glade / Their earthly home. He went into the world / Not now for fame, but true and humble deeds."

<sup>69</sup> Washington Irving, The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent., vol. 2 of The Works of Washington Irving (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1860-1863), 2:158. Irving, however, just as often rejected loitering. He declared it be unacceptable to genteel manliness. On these occasions he condemned physical and mental "wandering" as "pointless" and the "wasteful" indulgence of "good-for-nothings."

<sup>70</sup> Bayard Taylor, scrapbook "Poems and Diary," 31 August 1843, item 33, Box 12, BTP, CUSC. Instead Taylor was expanding the categories that defined manhood to include the active use of imagination, suggesting even that the failure to do so constitutes the typically lower class and feminine characteristic of passivity.

<sup>71</sup> David S. Reynolds, Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 64.

<sup>72</sup> Whitman, Leaves of Grass, Comprehensive Reader's Edition, ed. Harold Blodgett and Sculley Bradley (New York: New York University Press, 1965), 28.

<sup>73</sup> Taylor, At Home and Abroad, 2<sup>nd</sup> series (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1862), 329. In his biography of Walt Whitman David Reynolds has shown the importance this word assumed between the 1830s and 1850s. It was used by some to condemn those who failed to conform to the evolving ethos of work and pragmatic activity as the basis of manhood. Whitman used it in the opposite way. While Taylor's use of the term was not self-consciously motivated by any class allegiances, like these radical he and Willis were turning the term on those who most commonly employed it. The lives of Whitman and Taylor offer some interesting parallels that I will come back to periodically in this study.

<sup>74</sup> Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune, 102.

<sup>75</sup> Bayard Taylor, notebook "The Miscellaneous Productions," item 31, Box 12, BTP, CUSC. Some of Taylor's short stories from the late 1830s reveal experimentation with Byronic elements. Most of these tales, as we learned before, employed the stock devices of Scott like historical romance and the genre of sentiment. However in the "The Italian Maiden" hints of the Byronic style romantic hero begin to emerge as the central figure becomes darker, moody, and less chivalric.

<sup>76</sup> Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune, 169.

<sup>77</sup> Taylor's lecture on the history of poetry in 1841 suggests he believed the greatest poets were those who had achieved a unity of the two experiences: Homer in Ulysses, Virgil in the Aeneid, and Milton in Paradise Lost. And as in each of these great poems indicate, the journey takes both poet and travelers into evil lands. See pages 9-10 of his incomplete lecture on poetry, Scrapbook 11+, Box 12, BTP, CUSC. While not all travelers were poets, the traveler's life often yielded poetic imagery, and opportunities to penetrate the shell of convention that hid both the self and world from the understanding. Indeed, Taylor said, "art" like travel "declares us" all.

<sup>78</sup> Washington Irving, The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent., vol. 2 of The Works of Washington Irving (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1860-1863), 325. For an illuminating discussion of this essay see Kasson's Artistic Voyagers, 26-28.

<sup>79</sup> Fuller, Letters, 1:151-152.

<sup>80</sup> Diary entry dated "last night of 1863," Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, The Secret Eye: the journal of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, 1848-1889, ed. Virginia Ingraham Burr, introduction by Nell Irvin Painter (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 221.

<sup>81</sup> Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 296.

<sup>82</sup> Victorian Prose and Poetry, ed. Lionel Trilling and Harold Bloom (New York, Oxford, and Toronto: Oxford U. P., 1973) pp. 416-418.

<sup>83</sup> Thomas, 9[8] July 1866, Secret Eye, 280.

<sup>84</sup> Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune, 102-104, 105.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>86</sup> "Review of Summer on the Lakes," Brownson's Quarterly Review, 6 (October 1844): 546.

<sup>87</sup> Margaret Fuller, Summer on the Lakes, in 1843 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1844), 67. She wrote her account among the books of Harvard library where she as a woman had been given unprecedented access.

<sup>88</sup> Fuller, Summer on the Lakes, 12-13. Fuller repeated this pattern of privileged perspective over and over again during her travels across the Mid-West.

<sup>89</sup> See Buzard, Beaten Track. I am suggesting that in this context of material uncertainty, and where one's ability to meet the expectations set by society strongly determined self-worth, the possibilities of travel and international experience took on new meaning. Previously we learned how experience of the foreign served as a medium for the articulation of fashionable sentiments indicating bourgeois respectability and differentiation. Through the remainder of the century, this formula came under growing pressure.

<sup>90</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, Gleanings in Europe: Switzerland (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980), 23.

<sup>91</sup> Cooper, The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper, ed. James Franklin Beard, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960-1968), 3:209.

<sup>92</sup> See Orville Dewey, The Old World and the New; or, a journal of reflections and observations, made on a tour in Europe, 2 vols. (New York: Harper's, 1836).

<sup>93</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, Gleanings in Europe: Italy (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 10. Nathaniel Hazeltine Carter, Letters from Europe, comprising the journal of a tour through Ireland, England, Scotland, France, Italy, and Switzerland, in the year 1825-6-7, 2 vols. (New York: Carvill, 1827).

<sup>94</sup> The dashing Mr. Woodbury freshly returned from India brought a unique perspective with him. This was an asset far different from the wealth and trappings of material gentility that successes in India now allowed him to purchase. Rather it is reflected in the character's clarity of thought and spiritual attunement with nature. And it was what set him apart.

<sup>95</sup> Dyson, 24 July 1841, Life and Thoughts, 62.

<sup>96</sup> Taylor to G. N. Graham, 21 November 1842, Paul C. Wermuth, Selected Letters of Bayard Taylor (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1997), 46-48.

<sup>97</sup> Rufus W. Griswold to Taylor, 7 April 1843, Rufus W. Griswold Collection, Pennsylvania Historical Society.

<sup>98</sup> On Taylor's friendship with Griswold see Marie-Hansen, Life and Letters, 1:27. Graham's magazine, formed in 1841 by combining two of the young Taylor favorites literary outlets—the Casket and the Gentleman's Magazine—came to include among its contributors the periods most important authors. In the letter Taylor included several poems. Though only a poor apprentice, he told Graham, he had secured for his magazine several subscriptions, "paid considerable attention to the cultivation of poetical taste," and asked Graham to "make allowance for youth and inexperience" wished to know his opinion of these poems. Despite suffering what he called "proverbial poverty of printers," Taylor had ordered a copy of Griswold's book at the princely sum of 3 dollars a copy. During the next few decades the work sold nearly 300,000 copies. The book's popularity and new editorship made Griswold a powerful figure that aspiring writer sought to please. As an editor and foremost arbiter of poetic talent Griswold was on the search for new talent.

<sup>99</sup> Taylor to G. N. Graham, 21 November 1842, Wermuth, Selected Letters, 46-48

<sup>100</sup> Taylor to John Phillips, March 1843, Box 6, File H-Y, BTC, CUSP. Taylor to Rufus W. Griswold, 7 April 1843, Rufus Griswold Collection, Pennsylvania Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA. See also Wermuth, Selected Letters, 47-48.

<sup>101</sup> Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune, 162.

<sup>102</sup> John Davis, Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America (London 1803), 137.

<sup>103</sup> Mickle, 3 February 1843, A Gentleman, 353.

<sup>104</sup> Reynold, Whitman's America, 143, 363. See also William Leach, True Love and Perfect Union: The Feminist Reform of Sex and Society (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 216.

<sup>105</sup> Taylor, At Home and Abroad, 1<sup>st</sup> series, 41.

<sup>106</sup> Quoted in Baker, Sentiment and Celebrity, 57. Taylor probably copied this style from the sensational gazettes and novels of the day. A favorite topic in them was the rage for fashion among some young men in major cities. The affectation of dandified dress and behavior reflected the social instability that the growing genteel interest in cosmopolitan fashion threatened to introduce. The dandy might be the foppish social climber or wastrel that middle class society feared. But his dress, like the attitude towards "loitering" (see below) might signify the embrace of a revolutionary subjectivism. Following the model of Bulwer's Pelham, Willis had put fashion to work in precisely this manner.

<sup>107</sup> Baker, Sentiment & Celebrity, 54.

<sup>108</sup> Halttunen, Confidence Men, 159.

<sup>109</sup> Taylor to Phillips, 7 August 1842, File H-Y, Box 6, BTP, CUSC. "You recollect my poem, 'The Dying Maiden's Request,' which was published in the Post," he wrote to Phillips, "George W. Pierce asked me last Sunday about it but I evaded the question. Stebbins asked Lamborn's girls but they know nothing about it. And to crown all Henry Peterson told Sarah Webb to write to Hannah Darlington and find out the author.... [But] its all out now. Aunt Mary and Mary Agnew told H. Darlington and so almost every body that has heard of it knows its author." Ibid. The poems sent to the Philadelphia papers, representing a larger more exacting stage, he continued to publish anonymously perhaps out of the supercilious pleasure it gave, a call within him for continued prudence, or simply a desire not to appear too worldly to the frowning Quakers of the community.

<sup>110</sup> Taylor, "Autobiography."

<sup>111</sup> Taylor to Rufus W. Griswold, 7 April 1843, Pennsylvania Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA. Also reproduced in Wermuth, Selected Letters, 47-48.

<sup>112</sup> That is why Willis, when writing in his fashionable American Monthly Magazine about the public interest in personality, said that in addition to observing the “panoramic view of the inner man—the budding and blossoming and maturation of the intellect, the dawn of the moral being,” people also wanted to see “the mode of disciplining the intellectual forces, and marshalling them for combat.” The metaphor of combat was as important to the romantic spirit as that of organic development. Quoted in Casper, Constructing American Lives, 209-210.

<sup>113</sup> Taylor, “Autobiography.”

<sup>114</sup> Bayard Taylor, “Diary of 1844,” January 29 and 25, 1844, item 4, Box 9, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, January 29, 1844.

<sup>116</sup> Bayard Taylor, Views A-Foot; or, Europe seen with a Knapack and Staff, revised edition (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1863), 19.

<sup>117</sup> “Autobiography,” item 22, Box 7, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>118</sup> Taylor to John B. Phillips, 23 April 1844, in John Riche Schultz, ed., The Unpublished Letters of Bayard Taylor in the Huntington Library (Plantin Press: San Marino, CA, 1937), 5-7, 6.

<sup>119</sup> Taylor to Phillips, Spring 1844, File Taylor to H-Y, Box 6, BTP, CUSC. This letter is partially quoted in Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:34-36.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Taylor, “Autobiography.” This drama constituted the favorite plot of the romance of individual becoming. For instance, in terms of the liberal-republican construction of the self-made man, identity revolved around the mastery of desire. The story of sentimental-gentility demanded the cultivation of refinement. This device was no less important in constructing an identity of romantic-aspiration. Here the battle was overcoming the internal and external forces suppressing the emergence of the true inner self. This conflict was the narrative thread upon which to string that comparative sense of difference, described in the scenes above, into a larger single story of self-fulfillment. As Fuller had said of her book Summer on the Lakes, the journey had merely served as “a thread long enough to string on it all these beads that take my fancy.” Fuller, Summer, 242.

<sup>122</sup> Taylor, Ximena, 64-65.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.* While a small number focused upon the end of slavery, many others pursued private form of salvation. They too were likely to embellish their aim with broader implications. And many of them found it easy to believe that it was on the broad open fields of the world that they must fight this battle to overcome inertia.

<sup>124</sup> Taylor’s experiences and feelings finding subscribers are recorded in the early months of his diary from 1844, item 41, Box 9, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>125</sup> Taylor, Views, revised edition, 21.

<sup>126</sup> Taylor to Rebecca Way Taylor, n.d., Winter 1845, Box 6, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>127</sup> Quotes for Dickens’ Italy Journey, and Story’s Roba di Roma can be found in Buzard’s brilliant discussion of this phenomena in Beaten Track, 119-120.

<sup>128</sup> Taylor, Views, 34, 54, 34.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>130</sup> Cooper, Letters and Journals, 1:405.

<sup>131</sup> Taylor, Views, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, 78.

<sup>132</sup> North American Review, 64 (April 1847): 483-500, 484-485, 490.

<sup>133</sup> Bayard Taylor, “Diary of 1844,” July 25, item 41, Box 9, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>134</sup> Taylor, Views, 154-155. Exotic settings were thought to possess particularly transfiguring power because of the way they possessed complex layers of history and natural wonder. This gave them an enormous emotional charge and ability to breach consciousness from a variety of angles.

<sup>135</sup> Fuller, Summer on the Lakes, 76.

<sup>136</sup> Fuller to Ralph Waldo Emerson, 16 November 1846, Letters, 4:245.

<sup>137</sup> New York Tribune, 23-25 July 1850. The comments on her letters are taken from a review of a collection of her travel letters At Home and Abroad. The review was likely written by Taylor and can be found in Putnam’s Monthly Magazine, 7 (May 1856), 540-550.

<sup>138</sup> Taylor, At Home and Abroad, 1<sup>st</sup> series, 35.

## Chapter 4

### The Promise of Conquest: Landscape and Progress

In the summer of 1846 Taylor returned to a nation transformed. The last vestiges of the 1837 depression had faded and signs of economic vitality and re-awakened sense of promise were evident. In New York the newspaper publisher James Gordon Bennett captured the spirit when he wrote, “But what prospects open before us! [...] a people of twenty million, spread over a continent of immense surface, a wonder to ourselves and a wonder to the world!”<sup>1</sup> At home in Chester County Taylor expressed surprise at the spirit of industry that had arisen in his absence. Steam engines now pulled the cars along the West Chester railway. New businesses had sprouted. He could count nearly 40 firms that employed 15 or more people. The iron mills in nearby Phoenixville were the largest in the nation. The production of rails and boilerplates for the nation’s expanding industrial and transportation revolution kept the town’s 1,500 men working in shifts twenty-four hours a day.<sup>2</sup>

Taylor was determined to share in the new prosperity of the region. Backed by local businessmen Taylor opened a paper in Phoenixville. The town’s industrial energy attracted him. Like the “mills and furnaces” of London, “with their columns and clouds of red flame [...] burning through the darkness like Milton’s Council Hall of Pandemonium,” “the sound of the forges, ringing out through the livelong night” in Phoenixville kept “me constantly in a fitting spirit to work and think and struggle.”<sup>3</sup>

His plan was to build a paper “equal to any county press in the State.” With luck he felt he could extend his circulation throughout the county.<sup>4</sup> Taylor’s Pioneer emphasized culture and celebrated the rise of national power. The “events” Taylor often

wrote about included abundant reference to the United States' emerging commercial and political muscle. In extensive coverage of international travel by Americans and the exploration of men like Colonel Fremont, Taylor glorified what Bennett had deemed America's wonderful prospects.<sup>5</sup>

Taylor's editorial choices indicate an important trend that swept through the United States in the decades before the outbreak of the Civil War: an increasing tendency to identify personal hopes with that of the nation as a whole. Under the influence of romantic thought, the association between individual empowerment and communal fulfillment that had long been a part of American culture and political consciousness grew even closer. This romantic connection, however, reinforced the tendency to magnify dangers of personal fulfillment and individual liberty into a grand drama of national crisis.

Where his paper differed from others was the extent to which he emphasized literature, poetry and the arts. The first edition of the Pioneer in December of 1846 declared it would be a paper of culture and events, free of "political and sectarian prejudices." "Certainly," it declared, if the local counties "can encourage seven political papers they will sustain one devoted to literature and news."<sup>6</sup> As it turned out, Taylor's hopes for his paper were sadly misplaced; within months his ambitions for it were threatened by divisions within the community. The town, with its large population of immigrant workmen and small number "of people of culture and refinement," did not take to the paper's heavy diet of poetry, instruction, translations, book reviews, and fiction. It "was too high in tone" and not democratic enough "to suit the majority of the people" reported one of his patrons, the Dickensian Dr. Pennypacker. "County folk

nearby,” he explained, had other reason to dislike it: they “did not look with much favor upon a town, suddenly sprung into existence, where there were so decided a foreign element” and dominated by industrial activity. On top of this, the editor’s dismissive attitude towards provincial political interests threw the paper into disfavor with the prospering middle class who might have wished to read it.<sup>7</sup>

The underlying conflicts that damaged the paper’s circulation were common to the period. The commercial and industrial centers of the northern half of the United States served as the focal points of personal promise. But the growing population of foreign immigrants and working poor became a source of social concern and political partisanship.<sup>8</sup> Bourgeois interest with foreign culture as a means for establishing social hierarchy and disseminating their values was on the rise but the exigencies of party politics took precedent over symbolism.

In the pages of his Pioneer Taylor’s own trials found both expression and an outlet in the association of personal promise with land and national destiny. The paper frequently included colorful descriptions of the fertility and inviting emptiness of the West. Taylor’s editorial choices coincided with the emerging neo-Jeffersonian belief in the importance of land to the United States that dominated Jacksonian political consciousness in the 1840s. Many during this period came to believe that the continued promise of the United States existed in some direct relation to territorial possession. Expansion would serve as a counterweight to social change. Phoenixville’s new paper captured the nationalistic obsession with land and its linkage to issues of power and possession in extensive reference to the brewing conflict with Mexico, debates over Western settlement, and interest in European colonialism.<sup>9</sup>

The growth of nationalist sentiments during this period led many Americans to link their sense of personal promise with expansion. In the romantic tradition individual hopes and anxieties were projected onto the landscape. Taylor's dismal experience in Phoenixville, for example, seemed to strengthen his fascination with the idea of empire. His own hopes for upward mobility became intimately linked not just to the idea of foreign lands but also his possession of them. In the coming years his description of foreign lands, from the West Coast acquired from Mexico to the distant Far East, became infused with a militant tone of descriptive mastery as well as a conviction of promise. His career during this period illustrates the way the diverse fascinations with landscape aesthetics and belief in progress converged in the lives of many Americans to provide a sense of personal empowerment.

### **Urban Geography and the Hopes and Dangers of National Growth**

In the 1840s few places better embodied the reawakened dynamism of American life than New York City. Even as his paper faltered in Phoenixville Taylor's thoughts continually strayed to the great metropolis. The bustling energy of the city had captured the young man's imagination when he had visited it on his way to and from Europe and while he prepared for the publication of Views. He conveyed his wonder in a series of letters to the Pioneer written from New York City in August of 1847. "I see no reason why," he began, "in a few years this may [not] become one of the great capitals of the world, in splendor and art as it is in trade." The diversity of people and ambitions crowding the city produced vitality unparalleled elsewhere.

Business of all kinds is unusually prosperous this year. The bay is crowded with vessels, and the principle streets are nearly impassible. It is almost risking a person's life to cross Broadway about midday. These signs of prosperity are very

gratifying, and give additional proof of the almost miraculous advance which our country is making towards power and greatness.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed New York was at the heart of the nation's economic reawakening. Thanks to a combination of natural advantages, commitment to technological innovation, and social planning, by the 1840s New York had emerged as the commercial, industrial, and financial center of the country's new economic expansion. Since the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 it had moved ahead of Boston and Philadelphia. During the next two decades New York used its modern fleet and inland transportation links to take control over the lucrative southern cotton trade, develop commerce with the growing West, and become the nation's primary port of exchange between the New and Old Worlds. By the mid-1840s the city handled over half of the imports and a third of the nation's total exports.<sup>11</sup>

New York was also the nation's largest industrial center. By then nearly 100,000 workers labored in the city's vast array of workshops and factories. These expanding manufacturing enterprises and the accompanying businesses of law, banking, construction, and retail employed an ever-growing number of educated non-manual laborers as well. Many young, ambitious men like Taylor were converging on this center of opportunity. Between 1830 and 1860 the combined population of Brooklyn and New York grew by a staggering 600,000.<sup>12</sup>

For all of these reasons Taylor was right when he told his Chester County readers: "The fact is, New York is destined to be the great Metropolis of North America."<sup>13</sup> By the end of 1847, with his paper struggling to stay afloat, Taylor decided to abandon the venture and start afresh in the city. "I have lost none of my hope and confidence," he told Mary, "but I feel impatient about it, and sometimes almost—angry."<sup>14</sup> In New York "I

[will] go into the world of authors and write,” Taylor confided to his journal before leaving. “I [will],” he continued, “work ceaselessly and untiring.... Oh, I [will] do much, or try to do much.”<sup>15</sup>

Bolstered by the success of the newly published Views and his friendship with men like Willis, Taylor sought work in the city’s literary establishments. In the face of stiff competition friends advised him to “write to every paper and everybody.”<sup>16</sup> Optimistically Nathan Parker Willis reassured him that while “the town is full of five-dollar-a-week men [...] they don’t stand at all in your way.” “Your book has made you a name which would give your union to any paper great value.”<sup>17</sup>

He started off as a contributor to Literary World, Graham’s, and Union Magazine, but true to Willis’s prediction soon found a permanent place at Horace Greeley’s New York Tribune, the paper that had published many of his travel letters. “Today to crown the sum of my good fortune,” Taylor wrote to Mary, “came Greeley [...] offer[ing] me a situation as assistant editor.” “This is a glorious chance,” he went on to say. “It is certainly a stepping stone to something better.” Willis, Taylor related, described the Tribune job as “a good perch to fly from” (see appendix A for photo of Tribune staff).<sup>18</sup>

And indeed it was. In the 1840s the Tribune emerged as one of the nation’s foremost papers and the most widely read national in the Midwest. Over the next couple of years Taylor’s star continued to rise. Soon he was offered the editorship of the Union Magazine and Christian Inquirer. Flushed with what Taylor called the “growth of my new freedom,” he felt, as he said, “the glow and energy of youth [...] come upon me all at once.” Through success, he explained, “I have learned self-dependence of thought.”<sup>19</sup> He likened his growing sense of mastery over the terrifying dangers of the market to a

conquest of nature. “I could stand on the verge of a crag, when ‘storm and rain are on the mountains.’”<sup>20</sup>

His growing fame from Views sweetened the moment. Kept busy compiling the news from the 800 papers with which the Tribune exchanged, he told friends “that I am spoken of and quoted, from Maine to Georgia.”<sup>21</sup> “I tell you,” he wrote to his friend

John Philips:

I am amazed—thunderstruck almost—at the extent to which I am known and appreciated all through the United States. Every day I discover something [such as invitations to dinner or to speak] which shows it to me. [...] So you see I am just at the point where by one blow (and that blow I feel I have the power to give) I can lay a solid and enduring foundation for an honorable literary reputation.<sup>22</sup>

He saw it all as a prelude to even greater fortune. New York was part of that future.

Writing to Mary he declared:

Something tells me that a great part of my destiny shall still be worked out here. It is almost the only place in this country where the mind can grow without restriction. Philadelphia is merely an immense provincial town; here is the metropolis of a continent!<sup>23</sup>

In New York Taylor had found a place to spread his wings. It was a city on a scale to accommodate his expansive ambitions.

Yet New York was not without the very troubles that had hurt his efforts in Phoenixville. Indeed, for all its promise, the city’s vast population, preoccupied with a frantic pursuit of money and the political management of the new economy, was as frightening as it was exciting.

New arrivals to the city entered an urban landscape dramatically different from any they had known. Through a character in one of his novels Taylor later described his bewilderment upon arriving in New York.

Stepping ashore on the Courtlandt Street pier, from the Jersey City ferry-boat [...] everything was new and bewildering. The rush of my fellow-passengers; the cries of the hackmen, brandishing their long whips; the crowd of carts, drays, and carriages, and the surge and swirl of one chaotic whirlpool of Noise, in the vortex of which I seemed to stand, stunned and confused my perceptions.<sup>24</sup>

The sense of shock and terror that such scenes provoked is a commonplace in literary and personal accounts of the period. Knowing how the city first appeared to many, Horace Greeley warned the young Taylor, “Life is very hurried and fretful in a great city.”<sup>25</sup> That Taylor was so deeply affected by the city, despite his experience in London, Paris, and Rome, is a testament to the sheer depth of the disorientation it could produce.<sup>26</sup>

Assigned to the “city desk” during his first years at the Tribune, Taylor was brought into daily confrontation with the realities of life in the metropolis. He became intimately familiar with the impact of industrialization, urban growth, immigration, and class division. His reports informed readers about prostitution, gang violence, fires, and crime. The Tribune’s coverage reflected the way the emerging press fed the anxieties of urban growth in the minds of that paper’s largely middle-class readership.

The fact was that many viewed the life associated with the new industrial city as a primary cause of tyranny and social decay. A fear of urbanization had been central to Thomas Jefferson’s notions of American republicanism. “The mobs of great cities,” he once wrote, “add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body.”<sup>27</sup> To James Madison he warned: “When we get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, we shall become corrupt as in Europe, and go to eating one another as they do there.”<sup>28</sup>

In West Chester Taylor had been optimistic about these concerns. The purported menace of the immigrant to American society, he wrote in 1843, was “gradually giving way beneath the influence of Education, and the stern dictates of the Law.”

To the universal spread of reason and intelligence, we are to hope for brighter days—and on the education and improvement of the laboring classes, so much feared and opposed among the European Monarchies, we build our prospects of future prosperity and glory.<sup>29</sup>

The growing intensity of the conflict between the hierarchical middle class and democratic working-class culture would in the coming decades alter this optimism. Few incidents illustrated the battle more clearly than the Astor Place Riots of 1849. The events had their genesis in the rivalry between two of the era’s most famous actors, but the emotions that turned this private dispute into one of New York’s bloodiest riots stemmed from the intertwining socio-political meaning of culture and foreignness. Reporting for the Tribune, Taylor covered the conflict from the street in an account was inflected by the cultural debate.

The American actor Edwin Forrest and English actor William Charles Macready had nursed a grudge against one another for several years when in 1849 Macready arrived in the United States for a theatrical tour. On May 7, the two presented New York with competing versions of Macbeth. Forrest, a burly and emotional actor whose performances exuded intensity, appeared at the Broadway Theatre, a venue favored by the uproarious d’boys and working-class Democrats. By contrast, the cerebral Macready performed at the Astor Place Opera House, which attracted a wealthier audience. When Macready took the stage that night he came under assault by a group of supporters of Forrest who had invaded the theater.

Each actor represented a different side in the conflict over the meaning of culture. For each side Macready's foreignness had a different meaning. To his supporters Macready's English nationality, reflected in his sober style, was symbolic of the high culture forms to which they aspired. At the same time his opponents castigated the ignorant, low-class foreigners. To the largely Democratic, and indeed frequently Irish, working class fans of Forrest, Macready's approach to acting smacked of aristocratic social values that threatened their vision of American liberty. Theatrical performance was an emerging battleground for class conflict in the mid-nineteenth century.

Elite and middle-class Americans increasingly strove to restrain audience behavior and theatrical style as part of a campaign to elevate standards and thus use culture to solidify hierarchy.<sup>30</sup> Forrest's pugilistic, wide-open emotional style invited audience participation and made him a champion of radical democratic politics, a reputation he cultivated with extravagant displays of nationalism and political positions that scorned Whig attempts to create, as he said, a society that "benefit[s] a few at the expense of the many."<sup>31</sup> Macready's hecklers screamed nativist rebukes such as "Three groans for the English bulldog!" but also class-conscious attacks including "Down with the codfish aristocracy!"<sup>32</sup> The two slurs were connected in the mind of the hecklers. By attacking Macready that evening, his opponents were defending themselves against what they perceived to be the intrusion of foreign, elitist values into American society.

Crusaders for cultural improvement were not so easily defeated. A petition signed by forty-seven public notables, many of them friends of Taylor, asked Macready to perform again. Editorials lambasted the lowly behavior of the May 7 audience. Writing in the Tribune Taylor attacked the "miscreants who practice this atrocious and

impudent tyranny.” In disbelief he reported that these men even boasted of their behavior. To them defending Forrest was a “fight for Liberty.” “When will the stage, that vaunted school of Morality, that fulsome adulator and systematic corrupter of Popular Liberty, begin to teach its votaries clearer and truer ideas of Freedom?”<sup>33</sup> Events in New York were proof, wrote the Philadelphia Public Ledger, that there “is now in our country [...] a high class and low class.”<sup>34</sup>

Forrest’s supporters were not deterred, and they raised a xenophobic cry against the “foreign” actor and his American supporters. Posters appeared that asked, “WORKINGMAN! Shall Americans or English Rule in this City!” As further provocation, it was charged that English sailors would defend Macready at the “English Aristocratic Opera House” as the Astor Palace was mockingly renamed.<sup>35</sup> Another poster urged workers to protest the coming performance and help “to decide now whether English ARISTOCRATES!! and Foreign Rule! shall triumph in AMERICA’S METROPOLIS.”<sup>36</sup>

The final act of the drama took place on the May 10, when the anti-Macready crowd crammed into the area between Broadway and Bowery before the Astor Palace Theater. They were dispersed after National Guard troops who were called in to protect the theater goers fired four volleys, killing 21 and injuring 30. Taylor witnessed the fight “from within the lines of the soldiers,” he wrote to Mary Agnew. “I shall never forget the terribly sublime scenes of that night.”<sup>37</sup> For the supporters of Macready it was victory for law, order, and culture. But the danger remained. Days later, reflecting on events, Taylor told the readers of the Tribune that more violence might come because the

“ruffians congregating in the large cities” are incited by an “inflammatory press” that preaches a radical democracy.<sup>38</sup>

Ratifying the concerns felt by bourgeois Americans, European travelers to the United States suggested the nation’s cities were at least as degenerate as those of Europe. Charles Dickens, described New York’s Five Points district as a place “quite unsurpassed in all the vice, neglect, and devilry, of the worst old town in Europe.”<sup>39</sup> Patriotic Americans defiantly downplayed the similarity. Some, like the newspaper editor James Gordon Bennett, wrote from England that the United States is “the best and happiest country for all classes and all tongues [...] [because it has] none of the bloated wealth or terrible misery that we see in this overcrowded land.”<sup>40</sup> The debate became a standard part of the ongoing “war of words” between the countries after the 1830s. While responding to accusations of cultural backwardness, some Americans began to fortify their traditional attacks upon what they saw as England’s morally corrupt aristocratic social order, issuing further invectives against the social evils of its industrial present. England became the model of all that could go wrong in an industrialized, urban society. Henry Coleman’s feelings on London were emblematic of this sort of critique:

Every day I live I thank heaven that I am not a poor man with a family in England. In the midst of the most extraordinary abundance, here are men, women and children dying of starvation; and running alongside of the splendid chariot with its gilded equipages, its silken linings, and its liveried footmen, are poor, forlorn, friendless, almost naked wretches, looking like mere fragments of humanity. [...] I am often asked if I liked England. Yes; very much, very much; but the inhabitants of New England, I fear, very imperfectly appreciate their own blessings.<sup>41</sup>

Yet despite these protestations the views of European travelers disturbed many. Ironically the same comparative arguments that lambasted Europe’s urban decay logically gave visitors to America an aura of authority on the subject. In addition the

scenes described by apologists like Coleman seemed uncomfortably familiar to Americans. After all, by 1847 many like New York diarist Philip Hone believed their city had begun to look like those of the Old World.

Our good city of New York has already arrived at the state of society to be found in the large cities of Europe; overburdened with population [...] The two extremes of costly luxury in living, expensive establishments, and improvident waste are presented in daily and hourly contrast with squalid misery and hopeless destitution. This state of things has been hastened in our case by the constant stream of European paupers arriving upon the shores of his land of promise.<sup>42</sup>

Taylor concurred. In the course of his experience he frequently noted the growing similarity between New York and European cities. In a lecture comparing “Life in Europe and America” he wrote: “We already behold [in New York], and in other cities, those extremes of reckless luxury and still more reckless poverty which we once supposed were peculiar to Europe.”<sup>43</sup>

One similarity was the growing number of laboring poor overcrowding America’s industrializing areas. The journalist John O’Sullivan warned readers that in New England’s industrial towns he saw signs of the social ills that affected England herself. In the streets he saw a “multitude of defective beings, with sallow complexions, emaciated forms, and stooping shoulders—with premature wrinkles and furtive glances [that reveal] misery and degradation in a language not to be mistaken.”<sup>44</sup> After returning from Europe he drew the comparison more directly. He told his readers that the “corporate factory system” had already begun “to produce in the United States that depth of distress which has long excited the horror of every observer of the condition of Lancashire.”<sup>45</sup>

Fear that this rising population of laboring poor made American cities like those in Europe was compounded by the reality that many of the poor were in fact immigrants. In the decades between 1830 and 1860, nearly five million people poured into the United

States. In the single largest proportional increase of immigrants in American history between 1845 and 1855 alone three million immigrants arrived. Many of these were struggling Irish and Germans Catholics fleeing famine, social unrest, and poverty.<sup>46</sup> Most huddled in the industrializing cities of the North where work was available. In West Chester and later in Phoenixville, Taylor had come to associate these immigrants with the rise of urban life. Irish immigrants fleeing the potato famine poured into West Chester and Phoenixville. Drawn by manufacturing jobs, they comprised nearly 50 percent of Phoenixville's population when Taylor lived there.<sup>47</sup> New York seemed a city of foreigners. During his editorial adventure there in the previous year Taylor told readers in Chester County: "All the languages of Europe are heard in a few minutes' walk."<sup>48</sup>

Those less secure with the ongoing economic consolidation were drawn to neo-Jeffersonian fears of urban growth. For them the spread of large scale manufacturing and urbanization signaled the accumulation of power into the hands of a few and the imprisonment of many within a system of industrial labor.<sup>49</sup> Jacksonian Democrats saw these developments as a threat to both the entrepreneurial and republican freedom of the individual American.

The fear of Europeanization became a primary rationale for the promotion of territorial expansion. During this period a growing number of Americans, often linked with the Democratic Party, believed that the appropriation of land would ensure the possibility of individual promise. The so-called "Young American" faction of the Democratic Party was the most vociferous proponents of this view. Dedicated to the promotion of American values at home and abroad, which they construed in terms of

absolute freedom of individual behavior, they militated for a more aggressive national foreign policy. “Young Americanism” had come to refer to those who believed in the idea that expansion was an endless guarantee of American futurity.<sup>50</sup>

As early as 1837 Harriet Martineau detected this belief during her visit to the United States. Americans believed, she wrote, that “the possession of land” was an effective “cure for all social evils” that plagued society.<sup>51</sup> Over the next ten years that notion grew into a fully articulated ideology that necessitated expansion as a means to fulfill the nation’s destiny. By 1847 the Democratic Review was arguing:

Until every acre of the North American continent is occupied by citizens of the United States, the foundation of the future empire will not have been laid. The chief evil of Europe, that which oppresses England, and destroys Ireland, is the exclusion of the people from the soil.<sup>52</sup>

For all of his concern over the Europeanization of American society, Taylor was one of the many who felt secure with the dramatic changes taking place around him and confident in his abilities to succeed. This self-confident individualism drew Taylor towards the social and political stances of American Whigs. These were individuals who emphasized the importance of character over the abundance of land as a guarantee of national futurity. Indeed American Whigs often viewed territorial expansion with trepidation. In their view the enormous investment of energy consumed by the conquest and administration of an empire threatened to dilute efforts at internal improvements.<sup>53</sup>

Taylor’s fascination with expansion illustrates the fundamental problem that Whig anti-expansionist politics of the era faced. Those whose psychological make-up and beliefs made them apprehensive of Democratic calls for more land nonetheless held an equally expansive notion of personal and national destiny. For this reason the logic of empire had alluring appeal even to them. The Whig-sponsored Cincinnati Casket

expressed the sentiment its readers could not help but harbor: there is “a kind of charm in the thought of ‘widening the area of freedom’ that is difficult to resist.”<sup>54</sup>

This was especially true when the cause of territorial expansion became linked to the maintenance of social order. The rising fear of instability, creeping influence of democratization, and revolutionary upheaval that would threaten inherited privileges, became among older elites—or even the less privileged who nonetheless were confident of their own eventual rise—a powerful reason to support empire. During the 1840s and 1850s a number of developments supported this way of thinking. One was the interlinking rise of immigration and the electoral failures experienced by the Whig party. After a lost election in 1844, Philip Hone issued a typical Whig screed against the tide of foreign immigrants. These foreigners, he declared, “have robbed us of our birthright ... Ireland has re-conquered the country which England lost.”<sup>55</sup> Fear of popular tyranny had long been a theme in American political thought. Repeating concerns voiced by the nation’s founders, Taylor warned in 1843 that the foreign urban paupers invading the country were “liable to evil influences, and they too often become the instruments by which a few crafty men accomplish their evil designs.” As he would later write the right of immigrants to vote after only five years undermined the influence of “our wisest and most experienced natives” and “in a republic every unintelligent ballot is dangerous.” What made these immigrants so susceptible to political manipulation, Taylor believed, was their mental infirmity. If anyone doubted their incapacity to contribute to good government and social stability, he said, they need only consider that 75 percent of “our criminals are foreign born.”<sup>56</sup>

This suggests another growing concern: the emerging social violence in the industrial towns and major cities of the country. In the antebellum cities of the North these floating populations of predominantly male immigrants gathered menacingly in gangs, fire companies, and around local pubs. Taylor had seen this in West Chester in the final years before he left, when the west end became known as “Hell Town.” Supporting more than 30 bars and the site of periodic violence, the area incited anxiety in many older inhabitants.<sup>57</sup>

Between the 1830s and 1860s, the history of American cities became a chronicle of urban unrest. In the decade before Taylor’s arrival in the city in 1847, New York alone, reports one urban historian, “saw more than 200 major gang wars”; elsewhere the “the pattern was similar.”<sup>58</sup> “Riot, disorder, and violence increase in our city every night,” complained Hone in 1840. “(G)angs of young ruffians [...] prowl the streets [...] making [the] night hideous by yells of disgusting inebriety.”<sup>59</sup>

Taylor was complaining about the impact of immigrants on urban violence as early as his 1843 West Chester lyceum lecture, “America.” “The violent outbreaks which have so often disgraced our large cities,” he told his neighbors, “have been caused principally by the ignorant and degraded class who every year seek our shores.” Living in New York gave him a close view of the mayhem.<sup>60</sup>

By 1848 there were reasons to hope that all these hazards would be wiped away by political changes in Europe. The European revolutions that year excited the hopes of those who sought the spread of liberal-republicanism by means other than American Empire.<sup>61</sup> Taylor, who had written caustically about the lack of political rights in European states, rejoiced as liberal nationalists demanded democratic freedom across the

continent. After attending a massive rally in New York in April, he wrote: “One hundred thousand people—French, Italian, [...] all united in one grand national congress, as it were, to rejoice over the freedom of France. [...] [I am] thrilled with patriotic excitement [...] [only in America] could such a scene have been presented.”<sup>62</sup>

Desiring someone familiar with European politics to compile and edit news from Europe, Greeley extended Taylor’s responsibilities at the Tribune. The journalist’s reports echoed the enthusiastic sentiments that came from Americans at home and in Europe, and as diverse in occupation and temperament as a lawyer from Maine named Dean Dudley and the bored St. Louis clergyman Henry Martyn Field.

The sickly Dudley was in England as he prepared to embark on a new career in antiquarian and genealogical study. The political ferment, however, awakened in him a dormant spirit of political romance at the heart of his sense of American national identity. In response, Dudley wrote a series of enthusiastic letters for Boston newspapers giving a grassroots description of the democratic awakening taking place in England and the continent. No matter how much “cruelty” Europe’s aristocratic rulers might employ to “extinguish the late-kindled flame of freedom and light of democracy, in the hearts of rising millions,” he wrote, “the titled idiots” would never succeed.<sup>63</sup>

Recently retired from his ministerial position in St. Louis, the young Field was in Europe in 1848 on a pleasure tour when he found himself engulfed in political revolution. The letters Field published in the New York Observer during what would become the first of many subsequent trips abroad show the conflicted perspective from which many educated Americans viewed Europe. His letters reveal the sensitivity and republican prejudices common to the period. He scoffs at the English middle class servility towards

the aristocracy. “To my republican eyes,” he wrote, “a million small farms are a prettier sight than a hundred princely estates.” Like a good “Young American” he celebrated the imminent decline of aristocratic society and the spreading “virtues of the American political order.” The new parliament formed at Frankfurt, wrote Field, promised “to bring all the virtues of American political order to the German people.”<sup>64</sup>

Taylor was one of the many for whom these events stirred a powerful revolutionary and nationalistic impulse to spread freedom around the world. But as the summer arrived the news from Europe grew alarming. Violence appeared to be spiraling out of control and at the center of events was a menacing urban working class, the very group bourgeois Americans saw emerging about them. Reports being sent to the Tribune by Margaret Fuller were written in a radical revolutionary republican tone that both excited and frightened the paper’s readers.

To you, people of America, it may perhaps be given to look on and learn in time for a preventive wisdom. You may learn the real meaning of the words FRATERNITY, EQUALITY [...] You may learn to reverence [...] the true aristocracy of a nation, the only real noble the LABORING CLASSES.<sup>65</sup>

Later, after the frustrations with the failed revolution in Italy, she issued a more explicitly apocalyptic fulmination.

The seeds of a vast harvest of hatreds and contempts are sown [...] nor can that malignant growth be extirpated, till the wishes of Heaven shall waft a fire that will burn down all, root and branch, and prepare the earth for an entirely new culture. The next revolution, here and elsewhere, will be radical.<sup>66</sup>

Members of each political party could see disturbing implications in her warning. For Democrats, as the United States became less republican and more European, the nation moved closer to the brink of losing its special purchase on liberty; for Whigs, that liberty was threatened by radical sentiment and the tyrannical rule of an ignorant majority.

Due to some combination of these fears, the revolutionary spirit grew threatening to Americans as the upheaval spread. Many were disconcerted by the socialist sympathies of the revolutionaries. One paper described the revolutionary movements in France and Germany as “a compound of socialism, agrarianism, anarchy and infidelity.”<sup>67</sup> The aims of European revolutionaries were increasingly deemed contrary to the ideals of American liberty. In June the streets of Paris erupted in riots. Reports issued from the Tribune became more cautious. This turn of events reawakened pessimism over the chances of liberty being achieved outside of the United States. The chaos of previous revolutions in France and the failed 1824 Greek independence movement had made Americans suspicious that political liberalization would take place in Europe. There were several consequences. First, it magnified the belief some Americans held of the nation’s special role in the spread of liberty. Second, it actuated the latent concern for social order among skittish elites and political conservatives. And third, it fostered the association of territorial expansion as a means of preserving liberty.

Not surprisingly, then, even Whigs belligerently insisted on the blessing of America’s boundless frontier. The menace of European revolution convinced many who did not support the war with Mexico that the land acquired would exempt the United States from a future revolution.<sup>68</sup> Taylor’s boss, Horace Greeley, was among the Whigs who had not required a great deal to convince. He had long viewed the West as a safety valve for the dangerously crowded and socially explosive new city. Directing the excess masses towards the frontier seemed a matter of national security. His famous cry to “Go West, Young Man, go West” had begun as early as 1837 when he advised the 20,000 unemployed mechanics and 30,000 seamstresses in New York City to “take up the march

for the new country.” “Fly—scatter through the country,” he went on to tell them, “go to the Great West—anything rather than remain here.”<sup>69</sup> By 1854 he had honed the social theory behind his views and combined it with his earlier exhortations, writing “The public lands are the great regulator of the relations of Labor and Capital, the safety valve of our industrial and social engine [...] [so] go straight into the country—go at once!”<sup>70</sup>

### **Landscape Painting as an Aesthetic of Hope**

By the end of 1848 Americans had plenty of reasons to be hopeful about the future of the nation. The discovery of gold at Sutter’s Mill in California late in that year sparked a massive migration to the freshly won territory. Taylor and Greeley watched dumbstruck as a multitude of would-be millionaires poured into New York City to book passage to the coast.<sup>71</sup> Many of the city’s leading citizens were among the first wave of prospectors. “The California fever is increasing in violence,” wrote Philip Hone in May of 1849. “[T]housands are going, among whom are many young men of our best families.”<sup>72</sup> Outfitting this army of gold seekers revitalized the still sluggish New York economy. Expansionists were beside themselves. Melville captured the mood of the day in his novel *Mardi*, in which he rhapsodized on the promise of expansion.

West, West! West west? Witherward point Hope and prophet fingers;  
Witherward at sunset kneel all worshipers of fire [...] witherward lie heaven and  
hell! West, west! Witherward mankind and empires—flocks, caravans, armies,  
navies—worlds, sun, and stars all went! West, west! Oh, boundless boundary!  
[E]ternal goal. [...] Beacon by which the universe is steered! Like the north star,  
attracting all needles! Unattainable forever, but forever leading to great things  
this side of thyself.<sup>73</sup>

The proponent of Manifest Destiny could not have asked for a more visceral demonstration of the value of land or manifest expression of providence.

It was clear that many Americans believed in the opportunities that travel held. Young men of middle class upbringings took a substantial part in the rush west after the discovery of gold.<sup>74</sup> Elijah Cooley, was one, he was the second son of the self-made businessman and reader of travel books James Cooley of Indianapolis. In 1847 he left Ohio for west by wagon. He never made it to California. Nevertheless, after traveling through the Southwest and Mexico, he returned and capitalized on the growing interest as a pretext to deliver two lectures in his home on his travels.<sup>75</sup> Although burned with the cumbersome title “Recollections of a Journey through the Great American Desert, New Mexico, Chihuahua, Durango, etc.” both were well received as a timely source of needed information by the Indianapolis Indiana State Journal. “To say that the lectures were good,” wrote the reviewer, “is not enough—they were happy in illustration, rich in fancy, striking and original in style, dashing, straight-out and free.”<sup>76</sup> Much to pride of his father both were reprinted in Indianapolis Locomotive.<sup>77</sup> Though he had not found a pot of gold, back at Brown to finish his religious studies, Elijah expanded the lectures into a series of six articles for the Providence [R.I.] Journal that celebrated the link between success, land, and God.<sup>78</sup>

Taylor also observed in the course of events signs of benevolent intercession and hints of a grand moral design. “The foreign news, the gold fever, my book, and my city items,” he wrote to Mary, “I can’t help feeling a little of the spirit which is in our atmosphere. These are great times, certainly. The crusades were nothing in comparison.”<sup>79</sup> Greeley liked what he saw. “Thousands of [unemployed] people ready and willing to work” were preparing to exit the city, he rejoiced in the Tribune. His writers were instructed to stoke the frenzy.<sup>80</sup>

As the gold frenzy continued into the summer, Greeley saw not only an opportunity to promote the cause of migration but to increase the paper's circulation. Letters from Taylor on a recent journey along the Erie Railroad reminded Greeley of the young man's skill at travel writing and penchant for seeing the brighter side of change.<sup>81</sup> In late June the editor dispatched his eager journalist to California. Taylor wrote to Mary, "If I go, and successfully accomplish the journey, it will advance me more, as an editor, than five years of steady labor here. God is great; let us trust Him."<sup>82</sup> Greeley chose Taylor for another reason as well. In describing Europe, the young man had shown a skill at rendering landscapes with a contagious emotional intensity and at the same time figuratively transforming the land into a fulfillment of desires. The skill seemed just right for the message Greeley wished to promote. By the mid-1840s the techniques of landscape depiction had become an important means of promoting expansionist sentiments.

Taylor's descriptive powers were influenced by a literary and visual landscape aesthetic that had begun to emerge in the previous decades. In the United States genteel Americans struggled to combine their sentimental celebration of landscape as an instrument of exclusivity with their democratic beliefs. As part of the evolving compromise, depictions of landscape became invested with a sub-theme of possession. This tendency took concrete shape during the 1830s with the emergence of the Hudson River School painters, who established a visual paradigm for the subjugation of space.<sup>83</sup> Artists of this school painted panoramic vistas. In them land spread submissively before their viewers. Observers were invited to enter and dominate the land. In the context of the anxieties surrounding urban growth the paintings reassured their viewers with the

thought that before them were unspoiled landscapes to which they could escape from the corrupt city. They could recapture the promise of the future in the paradise of abundance.

By the heady expansionist days of the 1840s, images of the greater West began to rival the depiction of Eastern woodlands. The Hudson School's frequent use of contemplative foreground figures was joined by the scene of the solitary explorer, migrant band, or isolated village. More than ever viewers stood posed over an infinite, seemingly empty expanse of land awaiting their arrival.<sup>84</sup>

In these landscape scenes the linkage between mastery, progress, and American futurity became explicit. They suggested that the arrival of progress in the wilderness would redeem the land. Indeed amid these representations of nature, technological innovation and industry served as emblems that progress and liberty were advancing by the process of territorial expansion. One example can be seen in George Inness's 1856 painting "The Lackawanna Valley" where a train is shown speeding through the freshly cut timberland and in the distance beyond the frontier factories are shown. Rather than a destruction of natural freedom, the arrival of civilization, embodied in the train, would produce liberty. In his 1849 article on the Erie Railroad, Taylor put it this way: "We shall learn, ere long, that not great gift of science ever diminishes [...] but rather adds." He confidently added, "Let the changes that must come, come: and be sure they will be bringing us more than they take away."<sup>85</sup>

In the landscape paintings of the era, perspective as well as symbols conveyed to viewers a multi-leveled sense of mastery. As Taylor later wrote, looking down on a landscape a viewer feels a "lurking, flattering sense of power," that lies below "the surface of our emotions." "Elevated above the earth" like this:

other men and their concerns are below us: their stateliest possessions are insignificant patches, which we look down upon without respect or envy. Our own petty struggles and ambitions fade away also in the far perspective. We stand on the pinnacle of the earth, whereof we are lords, and above us there is nothing but God.<sup>86</sup>

At other times he connected the perspective to empowerment in much more material terms. Once while looking out over his own land in West Chester and the distant hills beyond, Taylor wrote:

[I] wanted to feel myself the owner of all the land within the range of vision. My possession was incomplete—it was only part of the landscape. [...] How fortunate are those large landholders in England, who can ride thirty miles in a straight line through their own property! They can mount the highest hill, and all which the round sky incloses belongs to them—stream, forest, meadow, mountain, mills, and mines!<sup>87</sup>

Taylor might have absorbed the aesthetic through the occasional newspaper descriptions of shows in New York and Philadelphia: his childhood scrapbooks reveal his attention to these events. His most common exposure to it came through the literary celebration of landscape by writers such as Willis. Willis's popular and widely imitated 1840 book American Scenery simultaneously catered to demands for genteel elegies to nature, celebration of technological progress, and expressions of nationalist sentiments. From them Taylor learned that the American attraction to land possessed somewhat different dynamics from that in Europe. As Willis wrote in American Scenery:

The picturesque views of the United States suggest a train of thought directly opposite to that of similar objects of interest in other lands. There the soul and center of attraction in every picture is some ruin of the past. [...] The objects and habits of reflection in both traveler and artist undergo in America a direct revolution. He who journeys here [...] must feed his imagination on the future. The American does so [...] he sits over the fire [...] and calculates what the population will be in ten years [...] and whether the stock of some canal or railroad [...] will, in consequence, be a good investment. He looks upon all external objects as exponents of the future.<sup>88</sup>

Here the American settler sees in his surroundings the uncorrupted possibility of an uninhabited land, planning its “improvement” through an interlinking exercise of individual freedom and use of modern technology.

Living in New York Taylor had refined his landscape aesthetic by visiting the exhibition halls of the city. The city’s galleries gave him the opportunity to indulge his passion for painting. Frequenting shows at the American Art Union and other galleries, he studied the recent works of the period’s premier landscape artists. The experience shaped the way he looked at scenery for rest of his life. Years later, when gazing upon the White Mountains, he described the vistas as so many “remembrances of New York studios.” “Every foreground was,” he continued, “made up of sketches by Shattuck, Coleman, and the younger painters: every background was a complete picture by Kensett.”<sup>89</sup> Taylor counted some of these artists among his friends. Other painters he associated with included Jarvis McEntee, Edward Hicks, and Eastman Johnson. He and John F. Kensett, the most famous landscape painter of this group (who traveled with and mimicked the style of the great Hudson River painter Asher B. Durand) took scenic walks.<sup>90</sup> But it was perhaps the less well-known Scottish born landscapist and founding member of the New York Water Color Society, Juan Buckingham Wandesforde, who had the greatest influence on Taylor.<sup>91</sup> In the mid-1850s Taylor took painting lessons from Wandesforde in preparation for his tour of Scandinavia.<sup>92</sup>

The irony that Taylor, who doggedly pursued direct experience of nature, nonetheless frequently imagined landscape in ways shaped by painting, reveals yet again that his understanding of places and people were mediated by aesthetics geared to satisfy diverse psycho-social needs. Here the longing for land and heroics of civilizing nature

revitalized social potentiality. Paradoxically the romance of conquest engendered feelings of liberty. The annexation of the vast stretch of land between the Mississippi and the Pacific Ocean after the war with Mexico enthralled Taylor. In early 1849, before he was sent to California, Taylor poured his enthusiasm into a series of ballads. Published anonymously in the Literary World and later that year in his second volume of poetry, Rhymes of Travel, Ballads, and Poems, Taylor hoped they would “give a poetical expression to the rude but heroic physical life of the vast desert and mountain region” of the new West and “its semi-civilized peoples.”<sup>93</sup>

Like the canvases he admired, the poems paint views of the West in which from lofty heights the reader gazes upon “the hazy distance,” along valleys shining with “leagues of gleaming corn,” towards “mountain’s misty rampart / like the wall of Eden towers, / And the isles of oak are sleeping on a painted sea of flowers.” The “peaks upholding heaven” rise above forests “crackling” with the “trooping elk.” The whole scene “looks down upon inviting valleys” backed by “golden mountain-sides; of airy sweeps” and “mighty landscapes.” Through these vast scenes are “highways” on which the reader is invited to journey towards the distant untouched paradise.<sup>94</sup>

### **California as a Symbol of Opportunity**

Once he arrived in California, Taylor appears to have seen little that challenged this rosy image. Soon after landing he wrote to Willis:

As for myself, everything has prospered beyond my expectations. I am storing up a rich harvest, not indeed of gold dust, but of incident and adventure. The materials here, for an author, are most marvelous and abundant. The features of such a historical phenomenon as I witness here will make a picture that cannot be forgotten—but I feel scarcely adequate to the painter’s work. I shall try, though.<sup>95</sup>

And try he did. In his very first letter from California he sketched a landscape of wondrous promise. His descriptions of San Francisco Bay set a fantastic scene before the Tribune's readers. Looking over the curve:

hundreds of tents and houses appeared, scattered all over the heights, and along the gap in the hills, filling the streets with clouds of dust. On every side stood buildings of all kinds, begun or half-finished, and the greater part of them mere canvas sheds, open in front, and covered with all kinds of signs, in all languages. Great quantities of goods were piled up in the open air, for want of a place to store them. The streets were full of people, hurrying to and fro, and of as diverse and bizarre a character as the houses: Yankees of every possible variety, native Californians in sarapes and sombreros, Chilleans, Sonorians, Kanakas from Hawaii, Chinese with long tails, Malays armed with their everlasting creeses, and others in whose embrowned and bearded visages it was impossible to recognize any especial nationality.<sup>96</sup>

The fantastic foreigners who fill the scene invoke the rich potential of the environment.

This point Taylor emphasized as he goes on to dazzle his readers with the astounding prices of goods and the ease of striking it rich. Men were making and losing more in the space of an afternoon than his readers knew they would ever see in a lifetime.

Superficially the scene Taylor paints has all the components—chaotic motion, social disorganization, random misfortune, and, as an analogue to all this, the strange and unpredictable foreigner—that could, and in fact do elsewhere his writing, produce fear in himself and his fretful audience. Yet here they do not. Instead the description is suffused with confidence. The chaos disappears behind the tone of pictorial mastery. The scene was taken in by Taylor as he skirted along a hillside on his way to a hotel. His walk offered a semi-circular view of the city. In its scale and emphasis upon detailed of particular scenes the description he writes appears the verbal analogue of the “panoramic” painting of the day.

Unlike the smaller, highly crafted, landscape paintings by Hudson River School artists, the true panorama were vast, frequently circular canvases depicting a 360-degree view from a height. Typically these panoramas depicted famous cities, historical events, famous battles, natural wonders, religious stories, or historical wonders. And there were indeed several of San Francisco. Intended to be popular fare, these huge, single-canvas paintings most commonly hung in theaters or circular buildings. To heighten interest they were also accompanied by a lecture and descriptive program. For decades the most renowned were displayed by John Vanderlyn inside his handsome brick rotunda at City Park Hall a few blocks from where Taylor worked.<sup>97</sup>

Panoramas strove to give the viewer the illusion of reality. The edging of the paintings were obscured and natural indirect light used to enhance verisimilitude. Some even used special dyes and backlighting by which the artists produced three-dimensional scenes and shifting or “dioramic” effects. The objective was to convince viewers they were at the actual site. In their detail and comprehensiveness these works distilled reality down to a two-dimensional canvas. In the process the paintings produced a comforting an almost scientific sense of visual mastery. Taylor’s verbal description offers a similar ethnographic density and in his comprehensive sweep seems to corral the chaos.

Taylor’s writing made frequent use of the reassuring power of visual description to generate a sense of confidence. The sublime terror that characterized the paintings of Washington Allen did not disappear but in the brightness of the vast sunlight canvases were displaced by optimistic awe at the fecundity of nature. Set at ease, Taylor’s readers readily accepted the emotional message of hope and promise so central to landscape paintings. Shifting his attention inland, Taylor described to his readers a vast landscape

awaiting the enterprising miners and settlers. There was gold in California, he affirmed, more “than ever was said or imagined: ages will not exhaust the supply.” Below ground “untapped veins” still lay hidden in the mountains. Colonel Fremont himself, we are told, presented the journalist with a nugget from a band a mile long. Farmers too were reassured. The fertile soil yielded “potatoes weighing from one to five pounds each; beets and turnips eight inches in diameter, and perfectly sweet and sound.”<sup>98</sup>

Periodically Taylor took stock of this cornucopia from a commanding height.

Atop Polo’s Peak he looked Eastward.

Situated about half-way between the plain and the dividing ridge of the Sierra Nevada, the peak overlooks the whole mountain country. [...] The mountains within ten miles of us had snow on their crests. [...] The courses of the Calaveras, Mokelumne, and Cosumne, with the smaller creeks between them, could be distinctly traced. In the nearer region at our feet, we could see the miners at work felling logs and building their winter cabins, and hear the whoop of Indians, from their hidden rancherias. On the west, the horizon was bounded by the Coast Range, Monte Diablo in the center and Suisun Bay making a gap in the chain. [...] [A]t our feet lay the great plains of Sacramento and San Joaquin, fifty miles in breadth, and visible for at least one hundred and fifty miles.<sup>99</sup>

Much like the paintings hanging in New York galleries, Taylor’s vistas were often virtually empty. Here a handful of industrious miners beckon others to come, while the Native Americans, reduced to distant voices, have all but disappeared.

In Taylor’s letters to the Tribune, this wave of progress was linked to the character of the new settlers themselves. In broader strokes he described a breed of Anglo-American men as hard working, enterprising, resourceful, and brave, galvanized by the dynamic energies of making a fortune and building a country. The men in San Francisco:

dart hither and thither, as if possessed with a never-resting spirit. You speak to an acquaintance—a merchant, perhaps. He utters a few hurried words of greeting, while his eyes send keen glances on all sides of you; suddenly [...] he is off, and

in the next five minutes has bought up half a cargo, sold a town lot at treble the sum he gave, and taken a share in some new and imposing speculation.

For some readers the sense of exhilaration and pride evoked by this passage would have been mixed with doubts concerning the practical and moral dangers of heedless enterprise.

The intrepid journalist quickly reassured them:

Nevertheless, I heard of nothing like a failure; the principle firms were prompt in all their dealings, and the chivalry of Commerce—to use a new phrase—was as faithfully observed as it could have been in the old marts of Europe and America.

Indeed this sphere of dynamic action was bringing forth, rather than diminishing, the better qualities of these men.

The most immediate and striking change which came upon the greater portion of the emigrants was an increase of activity, and proportionately of reckless and daring spirit. It was curious to see men hitherto noted for their prudence and caution take sudden leave of those qualities, to all appearance, yet only prospered the more thereby. Perhaps there was at bottom a vein of keen, shrewd calculation which directed their seemingly heedless movements; certain it is, at least, that for a long time the rashest speculators were the most fortunate. It was this fact, no doubt, that seemed so alarming to persons newly arrived, and gave rise to unnumbered predictions of the speedy and ruinous crash of the whole business fabric of San Francisco. But nothing is more contagious than this spirit of daring and independent action, and the most doleful prophets were, ere long, swallowed up in the same whirlpool against which they had warned others.

“About two thirds or possibly three fourths” of the new arrivals to California, Taylor explained, were able to adapt to this situation. That was because they were at heart “active, hopeful, and industrious.” “They feel this singular intoxication of society and go to work at something, no matter what, by which they hope to thrive.” The only individual who fails is one who is “slow, an over-cautious, or a desponding man.”

Fortunes will always be made by the sober, intelligent, industrious, and energetic; but no one who is either too careless, too spiritless, or too ignorant to succeed at home need trouble himself about emigrating. The same general rule holds good, as well here as elsewhere, and it is all the better for human nature that it is so.<sup>100</sup>

This assertion about “human nature” was a statement as much about the Caucasian race as a whole as the character of the men who now came to California. Taylor established the superior qualities of those who now settled the region by drawing stark comparison with the non-Anglos he saw. He showed little sympathy for the indigenous Native Americans who were being systematically exterminated. These “half-naked” “savages” who “overrun” much of the land were a menace. Mexicans were little better, he asserted and “born gamblers” to boot. He scorned most non-Anglo immigrants.

The countries which were nearest to the golden coast—Mexico, Peru, Chile, China, and the Sandwich Islands—sent forth their thousands of ignorant adventurers, who speedily outnumbered the American population.

Perhaps in an unconscious attempt to ease the anxiety over absorbing such a population, Taylor concluded that the native Californians—by which he referred to the local Hispanic elite—with their traces of European ancestry, “are vastly superior to the Mexicans.”

They have larger frames, stronger muscle, and a fresh, ruddy complexion, entirely different from the sallow skins of the tierra caliente or the swarthy features of those Bedouins of the West, the Sonorians. The families of pure Castilian blood [...] whose original physical superiority over the natives of the other provinces of Spain has not been obliterated by hundred years of transplanting. [...] On account of this physical distinction, were nicknamed ‘Americanos’ by the Mexicans.<sup>101</sup>

And yet the general inferiority of the native population demonstrated to Taylor the right of American territorial conquest. They were, he argued, people unable to employ the rational and mechanical advances of the day. Caucasians were introducing the technological innovations needed to extract the gold and put it to work building a civilized society.<sup>102</sup>

Taylor argued that Americans also have the advantage of possessing a higher character needed to govern. They show a “steady integrity and inborn capacity for creating and upholding Law.” “Never, perhaps, was there a community formed of more

unpropitious elements,” wrote Taylor. But despite “this seeming chaos [there] grew a harmony beyond what the most sanguine apostle of Progress could have expected.” At first the prevailing situation of “order and individual security [...] seemed little less than marvelous.” However, Taylor quickly found the reason. “Harmony,” he declared, emerged “in proportion as the emigration from our own States increased.”<sup>103</sup>

These Anglo emigrants brought a democratic order unlike the authoritarian one that existed before. Large portions of his letters describe the rise of democratic spirit. He implied, just as expansionists contended, that access to new land strengthened American democracy. Gold fostered social as well as political democracy, Taylor claimed. Rather than increasing differences in wealth, the line between the rich and poor blurred here in the general rush for advancement (see appendix A for Taylor sketch of Volcano, a California mining town).

Among the number of miners scattered through the different gulches, I met daily with men of education and intelligence, from all parts of the United States. It was never safe to presume on a person’s character from his dress and appearance. A rough, dirty, sunburned fellow, with unshorn beard, quarrying away for life at the bottom of some rocky hole, might be a graduate of one of the first colleges in the country, and a man of genuine refinement and taste. I found plenty of men who were not outwardly distinguished from the inveterate trapper or mountaineer, but who, a year before, had been patientless physicians, briefless lawyers, and half-starved editors.

“The practical equality of all the members of a community, whatever might be the wealth, intelligence, or profession of each,” he went on, “was never before thoroughly demonstrated.” “After what has been said,” Taylor concluded later, “it will appear natural that California should be the most democratic country in the world.”<sup>104</sup>

His comments could not but reassure his anxious readers on the Eastern seaboard who were struggling with their own experience of rapid change. In California where the

speed of urbanization, rise of commercial temptations, and presence of suspect peoples were much worse, order not only prevailed but the society was flourishing.

In spite [...] of all these dissipating and disorganizing influences, the main stock of society was sound, vigorous and progressive. The rank shoots, while they might have slightly weakened the trunk, only showed the abundant life of the root.

His final letters conveyed the impression of a growing normalcy to life in the territory.

Prices had stabilized and wild speculation was on the decline. The sense of possibility that defined the way most Americans thought of themselves was alive and well.

In short, without wishing to be understood as apologizing in any degree for the evils which existed, it was evident that had [Americans] been more cool, grave, and deliberate in their temperament—had they lacked the fiery energy and impulsive spirit which pushed them irresistibly forward—the dangers which surrounded them at the outset would have been far more imminent. Besides, this energy did not run at random; it was in the end directed by an enlightened experience, and that instinct of Right which is the strength and security of a self-governed people. Hundreds of instances might be adduced to show that the worst passions of our nature were speedily developed in the air of California, but the one grand lesson of the settlement and organization of the country is of a character that ennobles the race.<sup>105</sup>

Nearly all of his “fellow passengers” from the trip out had “done well,” he told his readers. To Mary Agnew he wrote: “I have transferred all my poetry from Italy to this young land of splendid promise.” The promise of the land had more than justified the cause of expansion. “Thank God that I was permitted to be here at such crises, and to blend my labors, even in so humble a way, with the infancy of the fairest empire on the earth!”<sup>106</sup>

### **Spatial Movement as Progress**

The sense of hope for the continuation of opportunity was conveyed in the romance of travel by the way movement from one landscape to another was an allegorical change in time. In the sequence of shifting scenery, travel narratives could reveal the

pregnant possibilities of the land. The total effect of Taylor's "Eldorado" letters, for instance, conveyed a triumphant march of progress. Visits to San Francisco at the beginning and end of his letters portrayed progress that he said seemed "little short of magic."

Of all the marvelous phases of the history of the Present, the growth of San Francisco is the one which will most tax the belief of the Future. [...] When I landed here [...] I found a scattering town of tents and canvas houses [...] Now [...] I saw around me an actual metropolis, displaying street after street of well-built edifices, filled with an active and enterprising people, and exhibiting every mark of permanent commercial prosperity.<sup>107</sup>

Between the bookend images of San Francisco, the reader witnessed a steady transformation from savagery to civilization.

During the 1840s and 1850s Taylor's narrative of progress, conveyed through the shifting descriptions of the land, was mirrored in popular visual culture by the moving panoramas. These were variations of the static circular panoramas discussed earlier. The first moving panoramas in the United States appeared at the Park Theater on Broadway in 1828 as the backdrop of a play about a tourist jaunt from London to Paris across the English Channel.<sup>108</sup> It was soon followed by "A Trip to Niagara; or, Travellers in America," which took its audiences along the path Taylor had followed only a few years before down the Hudson River from New York to Catskill Landing.<sup>109</sup> The moving panoramas were even more massive than their predecessors, typically a dozen or more feet in height, and sometimes measuring well over a thousand feet long. These huge canvases were wound upon gigantic spindles, which were set at opposite sides of the stage. Audiences would watch as the canvas was unrolled and moved across the stage from one spindle to the other. Like the predecessors, these early motion pictures incorporated dioramic lighting effects to produce dramatic changes, such as outburst of

fire, in what was seen on the canvas.<sup>110</sup> Typically they were accompanied by lecturers who commented upon the story during the two hours it frequently took for the canvas to slowly unwind.

The moving panoramas were seen by more people than either the landscape or panoramic paintings. These moving paintings possessed commercial and dramatic advantages over their static predecessors. They did not require special buildings for display and thus could be shown anywhere, even in the smallest towns, making it possible for impresarios to simply move when the audiences thinned. But showmen and artists alike also quickly recognized the dramatic appeal of the form. They realized that audiences craved to experience travel for themselves. The liberation from a fixed perspective that the panorama could provide opened a range of dramatic possibilities. Slowly unwound before viewers, the observers could imagine themselves on a journey.<sup>111</sup> William Burr's "Seven Mile Mirror of the Great Lake" incorporated "changing effects of night and day, sun- and moonlight, as well as the seasons and different climatic conditions." During its first 200 shows in New York beginning in 1849, more than 200,000 people bought tickets. In Boston nearly 1 million crowded its 1,000 performances, and another 800,000 saw it on tour. In total nearly 2 million attended.<sup>112</sup>

Taylor and other writers were also drawn to these moving paintings because of their ability visually to express a complex story such as progress. Taylor aspired, as he later said, to emulate the "poetic" ability of the moving panorama. The producers of the moving panorama were frequently treated seriously as artists despite their amateurish skills and obvious commercial objective.<sup>113</sup> Later, because of their immense popularity, the form became the object of ridicule by wags like Artmus Ward and Mark Twain.<sup>114</sup>

Yet in the 1850s, during the heyday of the moving panorama, the medium contributed to the emergence in the arts of a new visual paradigm of a stream or flow of images. The term “panorama” came to convey an encompassing view of surrounding landscape and also a shifting perspective on images. The form had a wide impact on other arts.<sup>115</sup> The use of panoramic effects, or of the moving panorama as a metaphor, had become common among writers by mid-century.<sup>116</sup> Evidence of its impact can be found the writing of many of Taylor’s contemporaries. James Callow and Karin Hertel McGinnis see signs of its influence in Taylor’s contemporaries John Greenleaf Whittier, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Walt Whitman. All show evidence in their innovative imagery that they were influenced by the moving panoramas.<sup>117</sup> Others have argued that Melville’s Moby Dick possesses interesting similarities to Benjamin Russell-Caleb Purrington’s, “A Whaling Voyage Around the World.”<sup>118</sup> The pervasive evidence of the panorama’s impact upon Knickerbocker writers spurred one critic some years ago to term such stylistic influence as the “panoramic approach.”<sup>119</sup>

This effect was perhaps greatest among travel writers. George William Curtis, in Lotus Eating: A Summer Book, described the shores of the Hudson passing before him as a “swiftly unrolling panorama of dreams.”<sup>120</sup> The use of a shifting string of images to convey a scene, a stylistic effect that owed much to the visual example of the moving panorama, is pronounced in Taylor’s writing. Taylor himself explicitly used the metaphor of the moving panorama later in his career when writing about a journey down the Danube.<sup>121</sup>

More significantly perhaps, as in Taylor’s California and Mexico writings, the moving panorama influenced how Americans linked space with the story of civilization

in much the same way that the early photograph became a metaphor for reality. As previously shown, the static visual art of the landscape painting conveyed a sense of mastery in effective ways. By offering a visual spectacle, the moving panorama possessed other advantages for communicating an unfolding process. The shifting yet interconnected images could more compellingly tell the dynamic story of historical transformation; in other words, the total impression more closely approximated the narrative qualities and ideological possibilities of travel literature.

Taylor for one was most influenced by the visual power of the moving panorama to express progress by the form's most famous sub-genre: a journey along the length of Mississippi river. Taylor and others were influenced by the master moving panorama artist John Banvard and his famed "Three Mile" picture of the Mississippi. In praise, Taylor wrote, "Oh, that I had the skill of a Banvard, to depict the glowing scenery of the Nile as he did of the Mississippi."<sup>122</sup>

Banvard's painting, and the many other Mississippi paintings that followed, made audiences part of what was thought of as the continuing civilizing process of the American West. As they floated down the Mississippi, spectators saw on all sides the steady progression of commerce and culture as cities emerged before their eyes where none existed before. The story that unfolded constituted a linear narrative of historical progress.<sup>123</sup> Paintings such as John J. Egan's "Panorama of the Monumental Grandeur of the Mississippi Valley" were explicitly ethnographic in their depictions of Native American cultures.<sup>124</sup> Finally, the significance of the river as a metaphor of progress from the savage to the civilized was heightened because of the importance of the Mississippi in the actual evolution of nineteenth-century American commerce.

Perhaps even more representative of this progressivist tale was the multitude of moving panoramas of westward expansion. Before his departure for California Taylor had the opportunity to experience what lay in store for him by visiting the nearly half-dozen western and “Gold Rush” moving panoramas already on display in New York before the end of 1849.<sup>125</sup> In them he had a model for the story he was about to tell. John Skirving and Joseph Kyle’s “Colonel Fremont’s Overland Route to Oregon and California” presented, for instance, a succession of more primitive landscapes as one moved westward. But at each step, and then in California, the observer saw that the arrival of the migrants was regenerating the land. Taylor, it may be recalled, returned continually to the figure of Colonel Fremont in his own rendering of the West’s transformation. For him, as for the Skirving and Kyle moving panorama, Fremont was progressive civilization incarnate.<sup>126</sup> The locations of his various adventures were dully reproduced for both the reader and viewer.

The ability of the moving panorama to draw the viewer into the story being told had powerful ideological implications. By absorbing members of the audience into the single narrative, panoramas brought the individuals into identification with the civilizing process. Rather than simply seeing symbols of technological change, such as the train in George Inness’s “The Lackawanna Valley,” audience members became that instrument of progress. Adding to the power of this effect, the individual drama of travel was supplanted by a public experience. Spectators were forged into an audience who together witnessed a unified story as the painting unrolled. Seduced into agreement with the story set before them, spectators became committed to the belief that territorial expansion was equivalent to progress and regenerative of opportunity.<sup>127</sup>

Moving panoramas were not exclusively about the West. By the late 1840s the citizens of America's major urban centers were regularly able to visually travel to some of the more distant parts of the globe without ever leaving home. There were variations of the European Grand Tour that took audiences to the romantic sites of Italy and down the scenic Rhine. In still others it was possible to visit the coast of the Mediterranean, take a pilgrimage through the Holy Land, explore the interior of South America, observe the cities and natural wonders of Mexico, see the frigid wastes of the Arctic, wander among the wonders of Asia, or become the mate of a whaling ship as it worked its way around the world.<sup>128</sup> These moving panoramas of the world conveyed a similar message about America's role in progress than those about the west. The opening scenes of Samuel B. Waugh's 1849 Mirror of Italy begin not in the Old World but the New York City where crowds of European immigrants waited for entry into the country. The United States, it was evident, was the land of tomorrow.<sup>129</sup>

This message was also clear in the way that the moving panoramas of foreign lands often focused upon the past—moving across the Atlantic and back into time. After a triumphal tour of Europe and pious visit to Palestine, John Banvard in 1853 presented New York audiences with a pictorial tour through the Holy Land at the “Georama” on 596 Broadway.<sup>130</sup> With Banvard's moving picture, audiences no longer had to imagine the processes of historical decay as they had to do in Cathorwoods' earlier painting on the same subject. For 16 months New York audiences packed performances. Conducted by Banvard, spectators moved across the Biblical landscape backward through time to what was presented to them as the unchanged hamlets of the Holy Land.

The travel author used the shifting set of scenic descriptions to convey a compelling argument about the role of America in the grand narrative of historical progress.<sup>131</sup> Egyptologist Joseph Parrish Thompson, for instance, used the metaphor of the moving panorama when describing the ancient city of Thebes. As he moved through the present-day ruins, he painted historical images of them so that for him—and his readers—“all history, all empire, and all time swept through my wondering soul.” The temple of Karnak becomes the center of his panoramic flight of imagination.

Every principle era of the national history [of Egypt], is represented in this stupendous pile; and as we go leisurely around it, and translate into our own language, or vivify into present actual scenes [...] we behold all Egypt move before us as in a panorama, whose scenes and actors are instinct with life.

The story his interconnected images tell is of the flight of civilization. It is understood that the “barking dogs and shivering shrinking Arabs” that live amid the hovels surrounding Karnak are but the degenerate remains of the great people who built it, and that the true spirit of civilization which the ruins embody live on only in the observer.<sup>132</sup>

In his lecture “Walking,” published posthumously as an essay, Henry David Thoreau provides a striking example of the moving panorama’s impact on the mid-nineteenth century imagination and its link to the ideology of progress.

Some months ago I went to see a panorama of the Rhine. It was like a dream of the Middle Ages. I floated down its historic stream in something more than imagination, under bridges built by the Romans, and repaired by later heroes, past cities and castles whose very names were music to my ears, and each of which was the subject of legends. [...] They were ruins that interested me chiefly. [...] I floated along under the spell of enchantments, as if I had been transported to a heroic age, and breathed the atmosphere of chivalry. / Soon after, I went to see a panorama of the Mississippi, and as I worked my way up the river in the light of today, and saw the steamboats wooding up, counted the rising cities, [...] and, as before I had looked up the Moselle, now looked up the Ohio and the Missouri ... still thinking more of the future than of the past or present—I saw that this was a Rhine stream of a different kind; that the foundations of castles were yet to be laid, and the famous bridges were yet to be thrown over the river; and I felt that

this was the heroic age itself, though we know it not, for the hero is commonly the simplest and obscurest of men.<sup>133</sup>

The American, Thoreau became convinced, was the hero of the future.

In short, whether observing moving panoramas of westward expansion, looking at the crumbling castles of the Danube, or touring the dusty ruins of the Near East, the spectator was left to infer America's centrality to shaping the future. At the very least, the moving panorama, as one of the most popular entertainments of the time, reflected a broad cultural preoccupation with the story of America's role in progress and centrality of that narrative to the identity of the spectator.

The number and popularity of moving panoramas with foreign themes suggest that Americans had begun to look beyond the West when they imagined the need for land. The popularity of the moving panoramas of foreign lands was a result not only of the way they emphasized the role of the United States in the future but the extent to which its people had begun to embrace imperial, perhaps even transoceanic, ambitions.

This can be seen most readily in productions such as "Mexico Illustrated," which took Americans on a survey of the battlefields of the recent war and then to the fertile lands and cities that the victory left ready for the taking. On his way back from California, Taylor ended his "adventures on the path of empire" with an overland journey through Mexico. The trip along the road from the Pacific coast to the Gulf of Mexico becomes for the reader a panorama of scenes and incidents. The reader is presented views first on one side of the road and then on the other while passing through the Mexican landscape.<sup>134</sup>

## Conclusion

Taylor arrived back in New York on March 10<sup>th</sup> of 1850. His last letter from these travels, written while crossing Mexico, had given the series an exotic finish. “Bayard,--Your Isthmus letter (the crossing) is generally esteemed as A No. 1,” wrote Greeley.<sup>135</sup> The famously cantankerous editor was so delighted by the successes of the entire venture that he rewarded Taylor with a promotion and the coveted use of a by-line. In the mid-west where the Tribune’s readership was growing rapidly, Taylor’s name and reputation had become an asset Greeley could not ignore. By late May Eldorado, or Adventures in the Path of Empire was selling briskly. In the years to come the book would remain one of Taylor’s best selling works. It became a valuable history to the story of Americanization of California. More importantly it served as literary expression of the visual story told in landscape painting: a story that equated American identity with the possession of land, and helped make the accumulation of property synonymous with liberty.<sup>136</sup>

How influential his letters and the book may have been is hard to gauge. Both were certainly widely read. His comments were quoted in the textbooks and the popular press.<sup>137</sup> Within a few years a copy of the book was reported found in a monastery in the Himalayas. The optimistic story Taylor told must have encouraged countless people to try their hand in California. The circle of influence completed itself when Taylor’s talks about his experience convinced the painter Albert Bierstadt to go west where he in turn reproduced upon canvas the myth of limitless land. Taylor’s own watercolor tutor Wandesforde moved to California, where he became an influential founder of the San Francisco Art Association.<sup>138</sup>

For Taylor, profits from the book made it possible for him to begin thinking about buying a piece of land in Chester County. He dreamed of living there with Mary Agnew, of living-out his own version of what would become called “the American dream.” In a testament to what he thought land meant he embellished ownership with magical fantastic properties and limitless possibility. Describing his thoughts years later he painted a vivid image in which the treasures of the land, much like the such riches had in California, lay hidden below the ground and out of reach of those too lazy and too timid to scratch the surface of fate.

Possession [of a piece of land] is not merely the superficial area: it extends, legally, to the center of the earth. I own, therefore, a narrow strip of territory nearly four thousand miles in length! [...] Under my feet, what unknown riches may not exist!—beds of precious minerals, geodes of jewels, starry caverns, sections of subterranean seas, and furnaces heated from the central fire! This is wealth which, indeed, would not be received as collateral security for a loan, but it is therefore none the less satisfactory to the imagination.<sup>139</sup>

The caves of Taylor’s imagination were of course his personal version of the rich veins of hope that he had described to readers in Eldorado. The message conveyed in Eldorado was that the United States would never be a poor country, and the true American would always have opportunity, as long as the two possessed sufficient land and ambition. Taylor’s identification of personal hopes and fears with those of the geography of the nation, as well as his tendency to visualize both in terms of domination, had become widespread during the early part of the nineteenth century. In sum, the expansion of private ambition and the country’s gathering strength seemed to merge into a single unfolding realization of promise through land.

---

<sup>1</sup> James Gordon Bennett, New York Herald, 2 January 1846.

<sup>2</sup> On the situation in Phoenixville see Douglas R. Harper, If the Must Fight: A Civil War History of Chester County, Pa. (West Chester, Pennsylvania: Chester County Historial Society), 28 and on West

---

Chester Harper, West Chester to 1865: That Elegant & Notorious Place (West Chester, Pennsylvania: Chester County Historical Society).

<sup>3</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 24 Dec 1846, Marie Hansen-Taylor and Horace E. Scudder, Life and Letters of Bayard Taylor, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1884), 1:82.

<sup>4</sup> Taylor to Dr. Pennypacker, 27 November 1846, File 1, Bayard Taylor Papers [hereafter cited as BTP], Penn State Special Collections [hereafter cited as PSSC]. Phoenixville Pioneer, 29 December 1846.

<sup>5</sup> Taylor believed that his friendship “with the principle editors of New York, Philadelphia, and Boston” would give him an advantage over “other West Chester papers.” His linguistic skills made him better able to exploit foreign papers.

<sup>6</sup> On the arrangement of Taylor starting a newspaper in Phoenixville see his letter below. Although still a town of only 2,000, it had grown from little more than a village with the same astonishing speed as its mythological namesake. Situated at the juncture of important railroads, tiny as it was, the town’s future seemed bright.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Pennypacker, “Reminiscences of the Poet of Kennet Square,” The Press, 17 September 1879.

<sup>8</sup> Though expressed in the idiom of editorial freedoms, Taylor responded to the situation in a fashion similar to many other Americans, by viewing the conflicts as a threat to his personal liberty and identifying his fortunes with that of the nation. The demands of popular as well as special interests—whether they were, as he said, “sectarian, political, monied, or sectional”—threatened, he told his readers, to erode the fabric of personal freedoms on which the country stood. Phoenixville Pioneer, 18 May 1847.

<sup>9</sup> For examples of this see copies of the Phoenixville Pioneer between December of 1847 and December of 1847 at the Chester County Historical Society.

<sup>10</sup> “Editorial Adventures,” Phoenixville Pioneer, 31 August 1847.

<sup>11</sup> Situated at the terminus of the Hudson and Erie Canals, New York City possessed unmatched access to the Western agricultural and Northern manufacturing centers. The city also boasted the nation’s largest and most secure harbor. To these natural advantages it added a large and technologically advanced merchant fleet, as well as the most extensive network of trading firms and financial institutions. Together these strengths allowed the city to eclipse its rivals. For discussion of New York’s growth during these years see Edward K. Spann, The New Metropolis: New York City, 1840-1857 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

<sup>12</sup> Out of these New York factories poured a large portion of the country’s consumer goods. The city was also the home of many of the nation’s biggest metal works and industrial mills. Nation wide between 1830-1860 the urban population of the United States grew by 700%. See Paul Boyer, Urban Masses and the Moral Order in America, 1820-1920 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 67.

<sup>13</sup> “Editorial Adventures,” Phoenixville Pioneer, 31 August 1847.

<sup>14</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 12 November 1847, Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:106

<sup>15</sup> Bayard Taylor, journal, item 44, Box 9, Bayard Taylor Papers [hereafter cited as BTP], Cornell University Special Collections [hereafter cited as CUSC].

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Beatty, Bayard Taylor, 53.

<sup>17</sup> Nathaniel Parker Willis to Taylor, 19 September 1847, Box 4, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>18</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 13 February 1848, Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:118-119.

<sup>19</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 12 March 1848, ibid., 1:122.

<sup>20</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 18 Aug. 48, ibid., 1:128.

<sup>21</sup> Taylor to J.B. Philips, 11 April 1848, Box 6, CUSP.

<sup>22</sup> Taylor to J. B. Philips, 3 August 1848, ibid. This letter can also be found in Paul C. Wermuth, Selected Letters of Bayard Taylor (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1997), 68, 70.

<sup>23</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 11 August 1848, Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:128.

<sup>24</sup> Bayard Taylor, John Godfrey’s Fortune: Related by Himself, A Story of American Life (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1864), 179.

<sup>25</sup> Horace Greeley to Taylor, 11 October 1847, Horace Greeley Papers, New York Public Library Manuscript Collection [hereafter cited as NYMC].

<sup>26</sup> Although Taylor’s letters and journals show ample evidence of the trouble he had adjusting to New York life, I suspect that his later personal and literary reflections on this encounter were based more upon the emotions he felt upon first traveling to Philadelphia and New York in 1844-45. If this is true it demonstrates the extent to which Taylor felt the need to reproduce this experience to meet widespread cultural expectations or establish cause for his eventual use of the city as a symbol of alienation.

- <sup>27</sup> Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, ed. William Peden (University of NC Press: Chapel Hill, N. C., 1955), 164-165.
- <sup>28</sup> T. Jefferson to James Madison, 20 December 1787, The Life and Selected Writings of Thomas Jefferson (New York: Modern Library, 1974), 441.
- <sup>29</sup> Bayard Taylor, "America," Lecture Box, BTC, CCHS, 8.
- <sup>30</sup> See Lawrence Levin, Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).
- <sup>31</sup> David Grimsted, Melodrama Unveiled: American Theater and Culture, 1800-1850 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 71.
- <sup>32</sup> Quoted in James Rees, The Life of Edwin Forrest with Reminiscences and Personal Recollections (Philadelphia, 1874), 324. For more comments see Joel Tyler Headley, The Great Riots of New York, 1712-1873 (New York: E. B. Treat, 1873), 118.
- <sup>33</sup> New York Tribune, 9 May 1849.
- <sup>34</sup> Quoted in Richard Moody, The Astor Place Riot (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1958), 228-229.
- <sup>35</sup> Reprinted in Headley's, The Great Riots of New York, 120.
- <sup>36</sup> Reprinted in Monroe J. Moses, The Fabulous Forrest: The Record of an American Actor (Boston, 1929), 260. For other examples of the anti-aristocratic language see discussion in Moody, The Astor Place Riot, 185-194.
- <sup>37</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 14 May 1849, Marie Hansen-Taylor and Horace E. Scudder, Life and Letters of Bayard Taylor, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1884), 1:145.
- <sup>38</sup> New York Tribune, 15 May 1849.
- <sup>39</sup> Charles Dickens, American Notes: For General Circulation (New York: Penguin Books, 1985 [1842]), 139. For examples of this see Fanny Trollope, Domestic Manners of the Americans (New York: Penguin, 1999). For further discussion of the topic in Boyer, Urban, 5.
- <sup>40</sup> James G. Bennett, New York Herald, 22 August 1843.
- <sup>41</sup> Henry Colman, European Life and Manners: In Familiar Letters to Friends, 2 vols. (Boston: Charles C. Little & James Brown, 1849), 1:100.
- <sup>42</sup> Hone's comparison was not with the image of Europe's feudal past but with the whole panoply of troubles associated with its modern cities. As Hone and Taylor's descriptions suggest, the problem of luxury which worried many as a question of moral corruption was being increasingly linked to the social question of economic inequality. The industrial society of England, for example, appeared plagued by a modern version of the feudal inequalities that had vexed generations of American thinkers and moralists. Now the rise of manufacturing and urbanization were making that evil part of the American landscape as well. Philip Hone, 29 January 1847, The Diary of Philip Hone, 1828-1851, ed. Allan Nevins, 2 vols. (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1923), 2:785.
- <sup>43</sup> Taylor, "Life in Europe and America," Lecture Box, Bayard Taylor Collection [hereafter cited as BTC], Chester County Historical Society [hereafter cited as CCHS].
- <sup>44</sup> John O'Sullivan, "White Slavery," Democratic Review, 11 (September, 1842): 261.
- <sup>45</sup> John O'Sullivan, New York Morning News, 24 October 1845, quoted in Thomas R. Hietala, Manifest Designs: Anxious Aggrandizement in Late Jacksonian America (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 99.
- <sup>46</sup> Sidney Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 749.
- <sup>47</sup> Harper, "If the must fight", 28.
- <sup>48</sup> Taylor, "Editorial Adventures," Phoenixville Pioneer, 31 August 1847.
- <sup>49</sup> For a discussion of the psychological response of Americans to modernization see Lawrence Frederick Kohl's fascinating study The Politics of Individualism: Parties and the American Character in the Jacksonian Era (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).
- <sup>50</sup> This argument is made explicitly by Hietala in Manifest Designs among others. The psychological importance is also emphasized by Kohl in Politics of Individualism.
- <sup>51</sup> Harriet Martineau, Society in America (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1962 [1837]), 168.
- <sup>52</sup> "New Territory versus No Territory," Democratic Review, 21 (Oct, 1847): 291, quoted in Hietala, Manifest Design: Anxious Aggrandizement in Late Jacksonian America (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 115.

<sup>53</sup> As I discussed in chapter 1-2 these more secure Americans, who commonly associated with the Whig party and its ideals, were more concerned with what Kohl argued was a qualitative concept of improvement. Previously I suggested that this gave them a different concept of what defined "liberty." For them it was understood in terms of self-improvement.

<sup>54</sup> Whig, Cincinnati Casket, quoted in Horsman, Race and Manifest, 235.

<sup>55</sup> Hone to Clay, Nov 28, 1844, Works of Clay, V, 509, quoted in Horsman, Race and Manifest, 226.

<sup>56</sup> Bayard Taylor, "Ourselves and Our Relations," Lecture Box, BTC, CCHS.

<sup>57</sup> Harper, "If the must fight", 28. See Bruce Laurie, Theodore Hershberg, and George Alter, "Immigration and Industry: The Philadelphia Experience, 1850-1880," Journal of Social History, Winter (1975): 219-67.

<sup>58</sup> Boyar, Urban, 69.

<sup>59</sup> Hone, 1 January 1840, Diary, 1:451.

<sup>60</sup> For example of Taylor later experience of urban unrest see his letter to Mary Agnew, 14 May 1849, Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:145.

<sup>61</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 5 April 1848, Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:123.

<sup>62</sup> At the beginning of that year a dramatic story began to unfold, as news hit New York of a revolt in Paris and the abdication of Louis Philippe. News of the emergence of a provisional republic and the meeting of a national assembly soon followed. Revolts then broke out in Berlin, Milan, and Parma. Widespread celebration in the United States greeted news of the March revolt in Hungary, the student and worker uprisings in Vienna against the Austrian rule, and the subsequent abolishment of serfdom by Austria's Ferdinand I. His joy reached new heights in May when the Frankfurt Assembly began writing a new German constitution.

<sup>63</sup> Dean Dudley, Social and Political Aspects of England and the Continent: a series of letters (Boston: Printed by the author, 1862), 31-32.

<sup>64</sup> Field's experiences there changed the direction of his life. Following his return he shifted his interest to journalism and authorship, publishing first his assessment of the Catholic faith, then a history of the Irish rebellion of 1798. In 1854 he moved to New York and bought an interest in the Evangelist, of which he eventually became the sole owner and editor, a famed travel writer, staunch Whig and Republican, and in the course of time an acquaintance of Taylor's. For biographical information on Henry Martyn Field see Dictionary of American Biography. Clippings from the New York Observer, scrapbook, Field Family Papers, Stockbridge Mass. Public Library, Stockbridge Mass., [hereafter cited as FFP].

<sup>65</sup> Margaret Fuller, "A Revolutionary Spring," letter 33, 29 March 1848, New York Tribune.

<sup>66</sup> "Prophecies," letter 36, 6 January 1850, *ibid*.

<sup>67</sup> New York Journal of Commerce, 21 July 1849; quoted in Cushing Strout, American Image of the Old World (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 53.

<sup>68</sup> For more discussion of this see Eric Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 27-28.

<sup>69</sup> Horace Greeley, New Yorker, 22 April 1837 and 3 June 1837. Quoted in Coy F. Cross II, Go West Young Man! Horace Greeley's Vision of America (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. 1995),

5.

<sup>70</sup> Greeley, New York Tribune, 1 July 1854.

<sup>71</sup> Spann, New Metropolis, 281.

<sup>72</sup> Hone, 8 May 1849, Diary, 2:867.

<sup>73</sup> Herman Melville, Mardi and a Voyage Thither (New Haven, Conn.: College University Press, 1973), 551.

<sup>74</sup> For a discussion of the role of the middle-class in the California gold rush see Brian Roberts, American Alchemy: The California Gold Rush and Middle Class Culture (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Caroline Press, 2000).

<sup>75</sup> 14-31 January 1848, Calvin Fletcher, The Diary of Calvin Fletcher: Including Letters to and from Calved Fletcher, 9 vols., eds. Gayle Thornbrough and Paula Corpuz (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1983), 4:14.

<sup>76</sup> 17 January 1848, Indianapolis Indian State Journal.

<sup>77</sup> 22 and 29 January 1848, Indianapolis Locomotive.

<sup>78</sup> 2, 9, 23, 24, 30 of January and 10 of February 1848, Providence [R.I.] Journal.

<sup>79</sup> Horace Greeley, New York Tribune, 11 December 1848.

<sup>80</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 11 December 1848, Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:138.

<sup>81</sup> For Taylor's 1849 article on this journey see his "The Erie Railroad," in the edited collection of domestic travel writings from various American authors The Home Book of the Picturesque (New York: George P. Putnam, 1852), 144.

<sup>82</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 13 June 1849; Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:148.

<sup>83</sup> For a history of the Hudson River school see Angela Miller, The Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825-1875 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

<sup>84</sup> For a pointed argument on the role of landscape painting in the spread of empire see Albert Boime, The Magisterial Gaze (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991). Boime discusses Taylor's connection to landscaping painting, but, as with much of his argument, his conclusion is somewhat overdrawn. The role of consideration of power, as I am arguing here, is of significant importance. However, when attempting to understand the overall meaning of these images, as with Taylor's writings, it is important to see them in various perspectives given by the other chapters of this study.

<sup>85</sup> On Taylor's coverage of the Atlantic cable see his five original 1855 New York Tribune articles titled "A Telegraph Trip to Newfoundland." They also appear in At Home and Abroad, series 1, 238-303. His Colorado letters were collected in his Colorado: A Summer Trip (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1867). Cooke took Taylor and several other "independent" journalists on an all expense paid trip to Minnesota intended to promote the sale of bonds for his company. Taylor's eight articles on the trip appeared in the New York Tribune during July and August of 1871. On his approval of the effects of white settlers and the negative impact of "half-breeds" see his New York Tribune article of 17 August 1871. For a general account of this trip see John T. Flanagan, "Bayard Taylor's Minnesota Visits," Minnesota History, 19 (1938): 399-418. Taylor, "The Erie Railroad," in The Home Book, 144.

<sup>86</sup> Taylor, At Home and Abroad, Series 2, 360-361.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 12-13. On the importance of Taylor to landscape painting see Robert C. Bredeson, "Landscape Description in Nineteenth-Century American Travel Literature," American Quarterly, 30 (Spring, 1968), 86-94.

<sup>88</sup> Nathaniel Parker Willis, American Scenery (Barre, Mass.: Imprint Society, 1971 [1840]), 3.

<sup>89</sup> Taylor, At Home and Abroad, series 2, 360-361.

<sup>90</sup> On Taylor's friendship with Kensett see for example Taylor to Mr. and Mrs. R. H. Stoddard, 4 August 1856, BTP, PSSC, also in Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:320.

<sup>91</sup> Wandesforde (1817-1902) was a Scottish aristocrat related to the Earls of Wandesforde. He gave up being a drawing teacher at the Glasgow Collegiate and Communal Academy and came to New York about 1850. He was noted for portraiture, having done likenesses of artist and inventor Samuel F.B. Morse and artist J.W. Kensett. Wandesforde himself was also a well traveled individual, having visited places as far away as India.

<sup>92</sup> Taylor to Rebecca Way Taylor, 15 March 1856, ibid., 1:314.

<sup>93</sup> Taylor, Rhymes of Travel, Ballads, and Poems (New York: George P. Putnam, 1849), preface. On the Boston reception of his poems see James T. Field to Taylor, 26 December 1848, Box 2, BTP, CUSP. James T. Field wrote him concerning their favorable reception in Boston; New Yorkers were no less enthusiastic. On the New York reception see Albert H. Smyth, Bayard Taylor (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1896), 216.

<sup>94</sup> The poems could not have hurt Taylor's bid to become the Tribune's special correspondent. A utilitarian by disposition, Greeley probably found the poems, as he often did with Taylor's work, to be a bit "gassy." The celebratory way they treated land and the optimism they inspired, however, was just what he wanted. See his poems: "Manuela"; "El Canelo"; and "Summer Camp." Taylor, The Poetical Works of Bayard Taylor (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924), 19-26.

<sup>95</sup> Taylor to Nathaniel Parker Willis, 31 October 1849, Wermuth, Selected Letters, 74.

<sup>96</sup> Taylor, Eldorado; or, Adventures in the Path of Empire (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988 [1850]), 42-43.

<sup>97</sup> On the history of the panorama see Stefan Oettermann, The Panorama: History of a Mass Medium (New York: Zone Books, 1997), Ralph Hyde, Panoramania! (exhibition catalogue, London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1988), Richard D. Altick, The Shows of London (Cambridge, Mary Agnew.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978), Kevin J. Avery, "The Heart of the Andes Exhibited: Frederic E. Church's "Window on the Equatorial World," American Art Journal 18, no. 1 (1986), and Avery and Peter M. Fodera, John Vanderlyn's Panoramic View of the Palace and Gardens of Versailles (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988). Before inventing the daguerreotype, it was Louis-Jacques Mandé

Daguerre who first used opaque and transparent pigments applied to both sides of his panorama canvases to produce shifting visual illusions.

<sup>98</sup> In places where the frenzied labor of men and mules stir the dusty ground, Taylor asserted, gold was quite literally in the air. Punctuating the sense of possibility Taylor made sure to add that it had been taken from ground Fremont had bought as an afterthought. *Eldorado*, 69, 62, 230.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 186-187. Taylor described the top of the mountain as the "very apex of the pyramid." The phrase perfectly matches what Boime described in his book *Magisterial Gaze* as the "apex of the imaginary cone" which dominates the American landscape aesthetic.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-88, 228, 233-234, 227. When describing them he painted a different sort of canvas akin to the genre works. Taylor enlivens the cities, towns, and mining camps with democratic portraits of men like an optimistic Welchman two weeks off the boat Mr. Livermore who the journalist declares the oldest American settler in the country, or the testy German woman who become an inn-keeper in the deep wilds of the country. *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>101</sup> For examples see Taylor, *Eldorado*, 9, 172, 180, 91, 77, 109.

<sup>102</sup> In other instances Taylor tried to illustrate the inferiority of non-Anglos by emphasizing their inability to employ rational, modern methods. Examining the troubling conflicts over land titles between native and the new American emigrants he concluded the fault resided with the native Californians and their antiquated system of record keeping. Here and elsewhere the Californian and non-Anglo populations revealed to him an inability to govern.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 111, 78, 193, 77.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 192, 336. Taylor proudly explained that the introduction of elections and social egalitarianism sometimes even included some of the local peoples of color.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 235, 232.

<sup>106</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 23 September 1849, Hansen-Taylor, *Life and Letters*, 1:156.

<sup>107</sup> Taylor, *Eldorado*, 152-153; 226.

<sup>108</sup> Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, Mary Agnew.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978), 204.

<sup>109</sup> George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), vol. 3 [1821-1834]:407-408. The accompanying book gives a vivid sense of the experience. William Dunlap, *A Trip to Niagara* (New York: E. B. Clayton, 1830). For an example of another Niagara Fall panorama see Joseph Earl Arrington, "Godfrey N. Frankenstein's Moving Panorama of Niagara Falls," *New York History*, 49 (April 1968), 169-199.

<sup>110</sup> On the panorama's movie like qualities see C. W. Ceram, *Archaeology of the Cinema* (London: Hudson and Thames, 1965).

<sup>111</sup> Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, vol. 3 [1821-1834], 407-408. Few moving panoramas of this period are known to exist. In my discussion of them I have relied on the descriptive pamphlets that often accompanied the paintings. Collections of these can be found in the special collections of Boston Public Library, and the Banvard Collection at the Minnesota Historical Society. The British Museum in London also has a substantial collection of panorama pamphlets.

<sup>112</sup> Bernard Comment, *The Painted Panorama* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000), 64.

<sup>113</sup> For a close examination of the moving panorama phenomenon see Karin Hertel McGinnis, "Moving Right Along: Nineteenth Century Panorama Painting in the United States" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1983).

<sup>114</sup> Ward's satirized the popular entertainment with a comic version of the spectacle.. T. W. Robertson and E. P. Hingston, eds., *Artemus Ward's Lecture* (New York: G. W. Carleton, 1869). For a discussion of contemporary satire of moving panoramas see Curtis Dahl, "Artemus Ward: Comic Panoramist," *New England Quarterly*, 32 (March 1959), 476-478. For Mark Twain's humor on the subject see his story "Mark Twain on the Launch of the Steamer 'Capital': I Get Mr Muff Nickerson to Go with Me and Assist in Reporting the Great Steamboat Launch. He Relates the Interesting History of the Travelling Panoramist." *Mark Twain, Collected Tales, Sketches, Speeches, & Essays 1852-1890* (Washington, DC: The Library of America, 1992), 178-183.

<sup>115</sup> Panoramas had an influence on a wide range of arts. For the influence of panoramas and dioramas on painters like Thomas Cole, see Ellwood C. Parry III, *The Art of Thomas Cole* (Newark, Del.: University of Delaware Press, 1988). On this topic and others see the excellent study by Kevin J. Avery, "The Panorama

and Its Manifestation in American Landscape Painting, 1795-1870," (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1995).

<sup>116</sup> On the influence of moving panoramas in mid-century literature see Dorothy Anne Dondore, "Banvard's Panorama and the Flowering of New England," New England Quarterly, 11 (December, 1938), 817-26; and Curtis Dahl, "Mark Twain and the Moving Panoramas," American Quarterly, 13 (Spring, 1961), 20-32.

<sup>117</sup> For a discussion of the relationship between panorama painting and the literature of the Knickerboker writers see James T. Callow, Kindred Spirits (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967). For a discussion of the relationship between the moving panorama and literature see McGinnis, "Moving Right Along."

<sup>118</sup> Kevin J. Avery, "Whaling Voyage Round the World: Russell and Purrington's Moving Panorama and Herman Melville's 'Mighty Book,'" American Art Journal, 22 (1990), 78.

<sup>119</sup> James T. Callow, Kindred Spirits (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 145.

<sup>120</sup> George William Curtis, Lotus Eating: A Summer Book (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1852), 316.

<sup>121</sup> Taylor, "Panorama on the Upper Danube," in At Home and Abroad, 88-101.

<sup>122</sup> Quoted in Anastasio C. M. Azoy, "When Art was Long," Esquire (September 1946), 97.

<sup>123</sup> Joseph Earl Arrington, "John Barvard's Moving Panorama of the Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio Rivers," Filson Club Historical Quarterly, 32 (July 1958), 207-240. Also see John Francis McDermott, The Lost Panoramas of the Mississippi (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958).

<sup>124</sup> Comment, Painted Panorama, 172.

<sup>125</sup> The more famous Western and Gold Rush panoramas were: "Voyage to California and Return," "Gold Mines of California," "Overland Journey to California," and "Moving Mirror of the Overland Trail."

<sup>126</sup> The truth was that neither Skirving or Kyle had undertaken to journey overland to California. To produce the painting they relied upon images in the published version of Fremont's travels.

<sup>127</sup> For more on the Emmert and Penfield's Fremont panorama, see John Francis McDermott, "Gold Rush Movies," California Historical Society Quarterly, 33 (March, 1954), 29-38, and Joseph Earl Arrington, "Skirving Moving Panorama: Colonel Fremont's Western Expedition Pictorialized," Oregon Historical Quarterly, 45 (June 1964), 139-143.

<sup>128</sup> As with American travelers a visit to Europe was a favorite choice of the panoramic travelers. Among the better known were "A Voyage to Europe," "Great Moving Diorama Illustrating the Grand Routes of a Tour through Europe," and "Panorama of the Tour of Europe." Titles of tours to other locations include: "Jerusalem and the Holy Land," "Pilgrimage Through the Holy Land," "Grand Classical Panorama of the Sea and Shores of the Mediterranean," and "Mexico Illustrated." Also available was Benjamin Russell and Caleb Purrington's "Whaling Voyage Round the World," Elisha Kent Kane, "Arctic Explorations," Frederic Church's "The Heart of the Andes," Samuel B. Waugh's "Mirror of Italy, or Italia," and Voigtlander's "Microcosmic Views of Scenes in Italy, the Alps, Germany, Spain, Portugal, England, America, China, Africa, etc." Domestic wonders were also a favorite subject of the moving panorama. While sites as diverse as Mammoth Cave, Hudson River, New York City, Lowell, and Niagara Falls (like Godfrey N. Frankenstein's "Moving Panorama of Niagara Falls," and "The Seven-Mile Mirror of Scenery of the Lakes, Niagara, and the St. Lawrence") were common subjects, a trip down the Mississippi river was by far the most favorite panoramic experience of the era. Over a dozen different versions of this journey had been painted. On the latter see McDermott's, The Lost Panoramas.

<sup>129</sup> These international moving panoramas satisfied multiple desires. Samuel B. Waugh's Mirror of Italy, or Italia, which first appeared in 1849 but toured the country for nearly two decades, took spectators on their own Grand Tour of Italy in which they visited the natural, historical, and artistic centers of southern Europe. The accompanying lecture helped viewers grasp the importance of what they were witnessing. In small ways the viewers were vested with the cultural capital sought after by so many in the middle class. And for the more exclusively minded, the romantic adventures and aspirations of Byron and others were discussed, allowing the discriminating observer to feel the rush distinctiveness. Italia; a Hand-Book Descriptive of the New Series of Italian Views (1855; rpt., Philadelphia: n.p., 1867). For a discussion of Waugh's "Mirror of Italy" see Kevin J. Avery's essay "Movies for Manifest Destiny: The Moving Panorama Phenomenon in America" in The Grand Moving Panorama of Pilgrim's Progress (Montclair Art Museum).

---

<sup>130</sup> Joseph Earl Arrington, "John Barvard's Moving Panorama of the Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio Rivers," Filson Club Historical Quarterly, 32 (July 1958), 207-240.

<sup>131</sup> For examples of its use in travel literature see among many examples I have found Henry T. Cheever, The Island World of the Pacific (1856), p 8; John C. Van Tramp, Prairie and Rocky Mountain Adventures (1870), 103; George Stillman Hillard, Six Months in Italy (1860), 2; Madame Octavia Walton Le Vert, Souvenires of Travel (1857), 297; and Thomas Ewbank, Life in Brazil (1856), vi.

<sup>132</sup> Thompson, Photographic Views of Egypt, 218, 230. Chapter 28 of Thompson's book is titled: "Dissolving Views—Panorama of Karnac."

<sup>133</sup> Henry David Thoreau, The Portable Thoreau, ed. Carl Bode (New York: Penguin, 1981), 609.

<sup>134</sup> See for examples Eldorado, 322, 309.

<sup>135</sup> Horace Greeley to Bayard Taylor, 26 August 1849, Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:166.

<sup>136</sup> For Taylor and his contemporaries the relationship between property and identity was shaped by John Lock in his Second Treatise of Government (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1952), chapter 1.

<sup>137</sup> See for example Emma Willard, Last Periods of Universal History (New York: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1855), 523.

<sup>138</sup> On Albert Bierstadt's connection with Taylor see Boime, Magisterial Gaze, 135; Gordon Hendricks, Albert Bierstadt, Painter of the American West (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1988), 58. Taylor later became a patron of Bierstadt. See Hendricks, Albert Bierstadt.

<sup>139</sup> At Home and Abroad, Series 2, 14-15.

## Chapter 5

### The Tranquility of Destiny: Empire, Race and Commerce

Taylor remained in New York after his return from California for less than a year and half. In late August of 1851 he set sail for Europe and Egypt. In the previous year the successful letters written to the Tribune from the Near East by the young Bostonian George W. Curtis' had convinced Taylor and Greeley that the paper could use more of same. It turned out to be the first leg of what became a round the world journey spanning nearly two and half years.

One of the central themes of the letters Taylor sent home during these travels focused on the emerging global possibilities of American Empire. In the months after his arrival back in New York, Taylor's thoughts turned in this direction as a result of his experience in California and the failure of the 1848 Revolutions in Europe. Both events intensified his millenarian beliefs in the special destiny of the United States.

The conquest of the remaining lands of western north American strengthened the central reassuring message that Taylor had propounded in his story of California: expansion was the means to national enrichment, the realization of individual dreams, and hence the revitalization of possibility or liberty at the heart of American identity. Taylor's believed implicitly in the interconnection between the possession of land and individual as well as national fulfillment.

Yes, one cannot properly be considered as a member of the Brotherhood of Man [...] until he possesses a portion of [the Earth] [...] Banks break; stocks and scripts of all kinds go up and down on the financial see-saw; but a fee-simple of solid earth is THERE! You see it, you feel it, and walk over it. It is yours and your children's and their progeny's [...] until the Millennium.<sup>1</sup>

“Until the Millennium,” with these words Taylor revealed how his understanding of territorial expansion and future of the United States were linked to a belief in providence. Some American Christians believed the United States would become the center of the Kingdom of Christ on earth that was expected to last a thousand years before the end of time. For most Americans the millenarian tradition surrounding the Puritan mission to the new land, and the secularized enlightened version of it that had grown with the Revolution, equated the destiny of the United States with the future of the world. Westward expansion was driven by Manifest Destiny, God’s plan for the United States to not only control the entire continent but eventual become the most powerful nation on earth.

Now in possession of California the country appeared at the threshold of a new phase in God’s grand design: a shift in the fulfillment of its destiny to rule the continent to that of becoming a global power. Across Pacific Ocean Asia beckoned. “Asia has suddenly become our neighbor with a placid, intervening ocean inviting our steamships upon the track of commerce greater than that of all Europe combined,” said Secretary of the Treasury Robert J. Walter.<sup>2</sup> The United States would reach across the Pacific and revitalize and purify the “decrepit” kingdoms from whence civilization first was thought to have emerged.

Events in Europe intensified this belief. Back at his desk at the Tribune Taylor returned to covering world news. Much had happened in his absence. Across Europe reactionary forces had begun to roll back the spread of liberal democracy. In late 1850 and early 1851 nearly every ship that anchored brought disillusioning news of advances undone. Taylor had the dreary responsibility of writing the Tribune’s reports on much of

the news. Representative of these disheartening events was the death of Margaret Fuller off the coast of the United States. Defeat of the revolutionary movement in Italy had prompted her to return home. The ship carrying her foundered off New York's Fire Island. Taylor was sent to report on the event for the Tribune. For three days he wandered the beach searching for Fuller's manuscript history of the Italian revolution. Her death and the loss of the manuscript symbolized to him the defeat of the revolutionary spirit abroad.

Disenchanted with the course of events in Northern and Southern Europe, Taylor, like other, turned his sympathies towards the Magyars revolt in Hungary. Its leader Louis Kossuth was widely likened to Washington. But again as the hopes of the revolution faded Taylor's reports became laced with bitter tones.<sup>3</sup> Like Fuller's attempt to return to the United States, the defeats of the liberal revolutions in Europe added weight to the claim that America was the last great hope of liberty. In his coming travels Taylor interpreted his experience abroad in ways that strengthened this growing sense of the nation's peculiar destiny to carry the banner of liberty to the rest of the world.

In other ways belief in American Empire raised troubling questions. For many the predatory image of trans-oceanic empire seemed to contradict America's vision of itself as nation dedicated to liberty. The image of such transoceanic empire was closely associated with Great Britain, and it was from the tyranny of that very power that the nation had had to fight in order to win its freedom. A glance towards Europe illustrated how the cradle of the world's most recent empires had fallen into social disorder. At home the congressional debates of 1850 over the spread of slavery to the west, and fugitive slave law, seemed symptomatic of the sort of internal divisions that eventually

tore empires apart. The conjunction of imperial expectations and internecine conflict prompted some to wonder whether the United States might be doomed to decline like all the other empires before her, a possibility that contradicted the millennialist belief that the nation was an exception to the historical narrative of the rise and fall of empires.

In his accounts of his round-the-world journey Taylor tried to set American Empire apart from those that came before. One of the overriding themes present in the travel writing of the day was the need to reconcile long held views of America's exceptional purchase on liberty with the new imperial future of the nation that now seemed so near at hand. Authors repeatedly struggled in the course of their descriptions of other lands to reassure belief in the United States' coming imperial greatness, and to differentiate the nation's expansionist ambitions from that of other imperial powers, thus preserving their country's exceptional claim as the bastion of liberty.

A pervasive strategy was to draw parallels and differences between American and British Empire. Great Britain was a natural choice for comparison. Cultural affinities between the two nations aided American efforts to identify their own ambitions for the future with the success of Britain's existing global hegemony. The emergence of a racial theory of civilization during this period favored this linkage in the American imagination. In his account of travel around the world, for instance, Taylor's narrative of possession and progress was given added structure by the emerging theory of racial Anglo-Saxonism. "To understand how 50,000 strangers could master 152,000,000 Indians," as Taylor said, "it is necessary to consider well the difference in the character of the two races."<sup>4</sup>

Through an emerging racial theory of civilization Americans tied their hunger for land to a larger story of world history. On one hand the idea of race served as one, and perhaps the most important, of several themes in a meta-narrative of historical progress that permitted Americans to see their growing power as part of British Empire. But on another Taylor was one of many who strove to insulate the United States from the menace of historical decline by first emphasizing the contrast between American and British Empire. He insisted that distinctive features of American power protected the nation from untimely decay. The definition of “liberty” held by Americans had long been crafted in contrast to the idea of tyranny in the Old World. This served them well here. Of course, England’s long, intimate and often querulous colonial relationship with the United States had made it a particular focus of this negative strategy of identity formation. The American identified oneself with what were perceived as trans-historical values of commercial freedom, material progress, and right of self-determination. As the embodiment of these qualities the United States would never decline.

### **Racial Theory, Anglo-Saxonism and Empire**

During his youth in the years before he began his travels Taylor was exposed to a theory of civilization that became central to the story he told in his journey around the world. It explained the growth of the United States’ continental and British global empire in racial terms. The two English speaking peoples were tied by blood, love for liberty, and drive to expand. Empire was as beneficial to civilization as it was inevitable and thus revealed the benevolent hand of God’s design.

Americans of the early nineteenth century were preoccupied with what Cotton Mather, among others, had termed “Mother England.” At one level, it was a fascination

fueled by a nostalgic longing for social order. At another level, they were exposed to a steady stream of the language of paternal connection. That language cultivated a sense of association with Great Britain that permitted Americans to share in the glory of British Empire and lend to their own hopes for American trans-oceanic power a sense of inevitability.

A contemporary of Taylor's named Isaac Mickles offers an illustration of the way in which this talk of empire entered into public discussion. It was a chilly Philadelphia evening in February of 1841 when the young law student hurried to catch a lecture on "National Vanity." The speaker Morton McMichael, editor of the Saturday News and Literary Gazette and Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge drew upon his knowledge of the travel literature to argue that France, Egypt, India, and China, had no right to be proud of their history. Indeed their pride was nothing more than vanity. Britain, on the other hand, had a right to feel "proud of the glorious past, proud of the prosperous present, proud of the promising future." Unlike the others, Britain used its empire to promote progress. Events taking place in Asia seemed to confirm these beliefs. McMichael's audience knew the British were routing the reactionary forces of the Qing Dynasty in the First Opium War.<sup>5</sup> Victory was widely anticipated to open the reluctant Celestial Empire to the "progressive" influence of free trade.

It was the sort of lecture Taylor heard many times growing-up in nearby Chester county. Like Mickles he was cheered by the rosy interpretation of British Empire because it reflected positively upon the future of the United States. Like the British, as McMichael explained that evening, Americans had a right to be proud as well. They had inherited "from their Saxon ancestors" the same qualities of leadership. And like their

brothers across the Atlantic, Americans could be justly “proud of [their] glorious past, proud of the prosperous present, proud of the promising future.”

Like most American McMichael anticipated that the United States would eventually eclipse the British Empire. As Mickles wrote, at this stage in his lecture McMichael “then attempted to lift the veil of time, and show us what would be our condition in two centuries.”

[By then the United States] will have blent its tide with the wave of the Pacific. Three hundred millions of inhabitants will sing paeans to their national father, Washington. The fertile plains of Texas and Mexico will be ours [. . .] Every sea will groan with our commerce; and at last the country from which we claim our origin, will become a province under the most mighty and splendid of republics, our own already invincible Columbia!<sup>6</sup>

In the coming years Americans like Mickles and Taylor fashioned the assumptions inherent in McMichael’s lecture into an ideology of American Empire.

While the revolutions in 1848 revealed the weakness of other European nations, they suggested that Britain was indeed blessed with peculiar strength. Britain was the exception to the largely disheartening stories coming out of Europe. Americans were amazed that Britain remained unscathed by the tumult on the Continent. Rather than contracting, British Empire was growing in Africa and the Far East. In Africa, where David Livingston crossed the Kalahari Desert and “discovered” Lake Ngami, explorers were charting new territory. In India, British armies were consolidating their rule. The defeat of the Sikhs at Chillianwalla and surrender at Rawalpindi in 1849 was followed by the annexation of the Punjab by treaty with the Maharajah of Lahore. Britain, but also America, appeared the exceptions to the tide of social chaos and national enfeeblement. For Taylor and others America’s own rise appeared to be at hand. The future seemed inevitably to point outward, beyond the end of the continent towards Pacific empire.

Taylor like most educated Americans believed in contradictory ideas of race. In his youth he had been exposed to differing racial arguments regarding race by the natural philosophers of eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By then most natural philosophers were convinced that humankind was divided into differing races, but they did not agree on the exact number or nature of what formed these races. Though taxonomy was a source of much debate, most at least tacitly agreed that the ethnographic and biological differences constituted a hierarchy of racial superiority.

In the preceding century an evolving series of ideas about race had come to buttress and even shape these beliefs. For McMichael and others, biology as well as ethnology linked the United States to Britain. Race, the “Saxon” ancestry McMichael believed both shared, was critical to understanding their penchant for empire. Thus rise of the idea of race reinforced existing cultural prejudices of ethnocentrism, created an explanation for a belief in the inferiority of other peoples, justified their exploitation, and provided logic to the processes of conquest and empire.

In many respect the taxonomic issues were secondary to the principle question that animated scholarly debate: what accounted for the difference between humans? Out of the Enlightenment emerged a largely environmentalist explanations. In The Spirit of Laws Montesquieu argued climate was the principle cause of human diversity. His views were echoed in a number of naturalists such as George Louis Leclerc Buffon. Taylor would have become familiar with the substance of Buffon’s ideas through the popular geographies he read as boy.<sup>7</sup> Typical of others he believed that color reflected a hierarchy. The advent of this racial classification transformed the hierarchical

progressions of culture favored by Enlightenment thinkers into what Taylor later described as an “ascending scale of races.” The common belief of the day was that, as Taylor said, “The higher we mount on this ascending scale of races, we find the faculties of Man not only more varied, but each and all of superior quality.”<sup>8</sup> Whiteness, the original color from which Buffon argued that all others changed, was assumed to be the best. Even skeptics of such views like David Hume, whose 1748 essay “Of National Characters” Taylor read in the early 1840s, conceded that climate conditions played at least some role in creating the difference between people.<sup>9</sup>

While environment and in particular climate arguments profoundly influenced the beliefs Taylor had about race, Hume’s skepticism was but one example that made him aware that there existed strong disagreements about the cause of racial difference. Readers encounter in Taylor’s writing that emphasize the inherent biological difference between peoples.<sup>10</sup> In the United States theories emphasizing the absolute difference between peoples tapped into the longstanding ethnocentric prejudices many harbored. These views led inevitably to question regarding the unity of human race or monogenic origin of humankind believed in by most of Enlightenment thinkers as well as believers in the Biblical account of Genesis. Reading Notes on Virginia in the late 1830s Taylor learned that Thomas Jefferson had doubts as to whether African and Native-Americans were part of the same species as those of European ancestry. In 1840 when studying Voltaire Taylor encountered this time an adamant critic of the monogenic argument. With Voltaire as well Taylor confronted the underlying issue which was at the core of this debate about human difference: if mankind did not share a similar origin then the story of Genesis and the Mosaic account of history were wrong. Taylor’s mother fretted

over the harm that might result from her son's reading of that "atheistic" Frenchman. But Voltaire was not the only one to be blamed. Shortly after that Taylor found further reason to doubt monogenic arguments in Lord Kames Sketches of the History of Man. Kames asserted without reservation his belief in a polygenic origin of the different races of humankind.<sup>11</sup>

By then, however, Taylor must have been becoming aware of the home grown polygenicists. In the early nineteenth-century the polygenic theories of race gained ground in the United States. Americans like Dr. Samuel George Morton focused on the difference between the physical measurements of skulls to assert not only their separateness as species but the relative superiority of the white race over others. By mid-century Josiah Clark Nott and George Robin Gliddon—the disciples of Morton—popularized scientific belief in the anatomical difference between races. Like Lord Kames before them these outward physical traits reflected the individual's inner mental and moral capacities. Their arguments dovetailed with growing acceptance of phrenology which asserted that physical attributes revealed the inner nature of humankind. An avid phrenologist in his youth, Taylor first absorbed the views of both Morton and Gliddon in the writings of phrenology experts like the Fowler brothers. He also encountered Morton in 1843 when reading the ethnological writing of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft. Many of the assumptions regarding the immutability of species and inferiority of non-white peoples were amply displayed in Taylor's account of California and Mexico. Upon his return it was evident that he studied Morton and Gliddon more closely. As we shall see shortly, reference to both the anatomical observations and

beliefs in racial hierarchy of these men would frequently appear in Taylor's future travel writing and lectures.

Nonetheless, neither the monogenic nor polygenic theories of race fully meshed with the broader beliefs held by many. Taylor's common conviction that humans possessed the capacity to improve was complicated by his assumption regarding the innate superiority of whites over others. Even in the South where belief in the absolute difference between races served to rationalize slavery, the polygenic arguments did not gain wide acceptance because they contradicted the story of Genesis. The universalistic and egalitarianism of the monogenic view proved attractive to the Enlightened sensibilities and religious beliefs of those like Taylor. For these reasons Taylor was drawn to arguments that emphasized the mutability of species. In the popular works of phrenologists and natural philosophers like George Combe, Taylor gleaned the essence of evolutionary arguments like that of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck. Evolutionism as it was understood then left room for the role of individual will, a fact which suited the beliefs of liberal Christianity regarding the role of personal choice in destiny.

It was this theme that preoccupied Taylor in his 1851 lecture The Animal Man given in the months before he began his round-the-world journey. Taylor presented this lecture fifteen times to audiences in Pennsylvania, New York, and other New Jersey. Despite the title his principle goal aimed to show that it was the mental and moral dimension of humans rather than simply biology which determined their destinies. In keeping with growing link between outward appearance and inward qualities that suggested the differing races of humans reflected developmental stages. As Taylor explained in The Animal Man:

The prominent characteristics of a man's nature, at the different epochs of his life, are nearly always expressed in his steps, his attitude, and his gestures. [...] In my observations of the different races of men, I have been particularly struck with the fidelity with which the mental and moral characteristics of each race were impressed upon the physical structure of those who belonged to it.<sup>12</sup>

When he speaks of “a man's nature” and “different epochs” in the same sentence Taylor here collapses the development of individual men with that of the human race as a whole. Color to him and others was the most “prominent physical characteristic of a man's nature.” The stages of human development were marked by skin color. It was asserted that humans evolved from darker to lighter skin color—a processes that culminated in whiteness. Taylor's experiences in California, where as we have seen he made racist arguments about the justice of American conquest, had brought him to think more earnestly about the relationship between character, race, and empire.

In Taylor's mind, and that of a good many others, these conflicting ideas revolved confusingly around a romantic racial meta-narrative of Anglo-Saxonism. The muddled, half-mythic vagueness of Anglo-Saxonism, provided a loose narrative around which deposit these various notions and avoid the rigorous of forcing the whole to make sense. Taylor structured his experience of the coming voyage around the world in accordance with the story of Anglo-Saxonism. For Morton McMichael, the United States and Britain shared descent from the Germanic Anglo and Saxon tribes who conquered England in the early middle-ages. These peoples were a unique subgroup of the biologically superior Caucasian race. It was thought that the Anglo-Saxons possessed a distinct gift for government and propensity for territorial conquest. Beneath this central assertion Anglo-Saxonists entertained an eclectic variety of racial ideas. Its chief strength as a theory lay in the reassuring claim for whites that they belonged to an immutable, racially superior

type from which “inferior” peoples were sometimes thought to have devolved. And yet in practice Taylor, like others, mingled this belief with the notion that the Anglo-Saxon was a step, and therefore perhaps not the last, of an ongoing process of racial perfection.

Taylor had first absorbed this grander historical narrative in the writings of Carlyle and the English romantics. Their writings tied the idealized Anglo-Saxonism that Taylor had gleaned as a boy from reading Thomas Percy, Sharon Turner, and Sir Walter Scott with the racially charged notions of Teutonic cultural distinctiveness that German romantics linked to the belief in an Indo-European language originating in central Asia.<sup>13</sup> According to this meta-narrative the Caucasian peoples who originated in Asia were marching westward. In the wake of their advance, civilizations and empires were spawned and then fell. As Caucasians migrated, they displaced the less fit races and spun-off branches from its main stock. As Taylor later summarized it:

The supremacy of the Caucasian race dates from the earliest historic times. It is the only branch of the human family which has originated a progressive civilization—nay, I believe that if our knowledge of the remote Past were clearer, we should find that all the civilization of other races sprang from it. The rise and fall of ancient empires were but the successive steps whereby it rose. The light of Civilization, in the course of 4,000 years, has been handed from one tribe to another, but it has always remained in the possession of the same family.<sup>14</sup>

The link was later reinforced during Taylor’s own study in Germany. German racial theory had informed the thoughts of earlier German-educated American scholars like George Bancroft. After their study abroad, Bancroft and others returned to recast their nation’s history into the grand romantic narrative they had absorbed in Europe. But the racial romantic narrative found its way indirectly into the history of others, such as William Hickling Prescott, whose The Oregon Trail celebrated the special role of the American Anglo-Saxon in the continuation of civilization’s westward course.<sup>15</sup>

Taylor, who became friends with both Bancroft and Prescott during the later 1840s, drew from their narratives a rationale for territorial expansion. In The Oregon Trail and his earlier Conquest of Peru Prescott, like Bancroft in his study of colonial and revolutionary America, thematically emphasized the role of expansion in history and in progress. Ironically while these histories are remembered today as critical texts in the evolution of American exceptionalism, at the time of their writing the arguments they propounded were recognized as evolving out of a much larger racially inflected understanding of world history and bore significant meaning for the way Americans linked themselves to the history of empire.<sup>16</sup>

Fundamental to the romantic notion of racial character was the confusion of biology with culture: the belief that the language and cultural practices of a people reflected a racial distinctiveness. From this Germanic and English scholarly tradition Taylor learned to meld biological classification, the physical nature of the body, with ideas of culture shared by these people. Thus race was linked to the long held ethnocentric assumption that Europeans held of their religious, artistic, and material superiority over others. Proof of Caucasian racial superiority was demonstrated by the superiority of European culture. Indeed, as Taylor later argued, all the great religions come from the Caucasian:

If we except Confucius, who cannot positively be claimed, since we know so little about him, every form of reasoned religion and every code of moral and social law originated with the family to which we belong. [...] The race has not only been chosen, in the providence of God, as the fittest for receiving and disseminating His Eternal Truth, but it has also produced all the faiths which rest on a moral and philosophical basis. It has developed government, laws, art, science, languages—has discovered and subjugated the latent forces of Nature—has even gone beyond the Earth, measured the stars in their courses, and only paused on the brink of that awful Infinity which is the veil covering the countenance of God.<sup>17</sup>

By the middle of the century the connections between biology and culture had become further confused by the increasing introduction of science and technology into the equation. During the previous half-century arguments propounding a progressive scale of history and race had shifted from an emphasis upon beliefs and behavior toward differences in material culture as an index of development.<sup>18</sup>

Taylor's final letters of the trip use Mexico's scientific ignorance and technological backwardness as proof of racial and national inferiority, and as justification for the cause of imperial domination. In a small town named La Bayona in the Tierra Caliente he reported that villagers' were astonished to learn that men looked through a machine to see the moon twenty feet wide, that boats ran against the wind, and that a man could send all his children to school for a dollar a year. "Ah, how grand that is! how much better than here!" one of them exclaimed. He then asked, "Why is it that everything is so fortunate in the United States?"

"Because," said the other, "it is a nation muy poderosa." [...] "That is true," rejoined the other, "and that is the reason why all the Americans we see are so much wiser than we are." [...] In speaking of us, the natives exhibited (and I say it not with any feeling of national pride) the liking which men bear to their superiors. They acknowledge our greater power and intelligence as a nation, without jealousy, and with an anticipation rather than a fear that our rule will one day be extended over them.<sup>19</sup>

This dense and contradictory set of racial beliefs shaped Taylor's experience in this round-the-world journey. What is certain as well is that the question surrounding the idea of race also contributed to public interest in voyages like Taylor's. The public's thirst to understand this racial history of civilization and connect itself to the imperial destiny of the Anglo-Saxon people fueled the enormous popularity of John Lloyd Stephens' explorations of lost civilizations in Egypt, Greece, and Central America. It

was a way, in part, for the American people to understand their racial heritage and destiny.

By the time Taylor left New York in 1851 his mind was preoccupied with the racial framework of world history. The course of his journey would take him back along the course of time. He was primed to interpret what he saw as proof of the western migration of the Caucasian race and the empires they spawned. He was also predisposed to see this “natural” process as evidence of providence. “Destiny is not blind,” he wrote a friend in March of 1851, “we think we are groping in the dark, but we are always guided by a wise hand.”<sup>20</sup>

### **Travel into the Past**

After a month and a half stay in Europe, Taylor landed at Alexandria on November 4<sup>th</sup> 1851. Ten days later he left Cairo on a hired boat down the Nile. In mid-January of 1852 he arrived at Khartoum where the Blue Nile and White Nile converge. From there he traveled several hundred miles down the White Nile to the land of the “Shillook Negroes” in what is today southern Sudan. On his way back Taylor cut across the Egyptian desert. At night Taylor learned Arabic listening to stories “like those from the Arabian Nights” told by his dragoman, Achmet el Saidi, before the fire. He wore the clothes of the Bedouin and ate as they did. By the time he returned to Cairo on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1852 he believed himself indistinguishable from an Arab and he believed he had felt the presence of the past in ways few have an opportunity to experience.<sup>21</sup> To his readers the first phase of Taylor’s travels told the story of imperial and racial decay. Amid the ruins of Egypt’s past his narrative repeatedly reminds readers of the fate of once powerful peoples.

To Americans few locations embodied antiquity more than Egypt. Americans held an intimate sense of the region's past drawn from Biblical reading. In the preface to the collected letters Taylor wrote simply, "I have described somewhat minutely [...] insensible to the interest which every traveler in Egypt must feel in the remains of her ancient art." In the letters that comprised the first of the three books, The Journey to Central Africa, he described his voyage down the Nile. The letters Taylor sent home alternated from one shore to the other and strove to capture the emotional power of Banvard's Mississippi panorama.<sup>22</sup> But it was a narrative of regression. Each exotic vista takes the reader further into the past. To Americans who contemplated the ancient ruins, the great expanse of time opened before them. Texan planter William E. Kendall left us a typical account. The "sad, earnest, eyes" of the Sphinx, he thought while contemplating its form,

looked upon Abraham and Moses, and all the ancient worthies of Egypt—upon the glory of her forgotten dynasties—upon the Greek, Roman and Ottoman conquerors—upon the plagues, pestilences, and ceaseless miseries of her race—upon the wandering tourist of all ages—upon Herodotus, as it were, of yesterday, and [the Bayard] Taylor of today—upon all with ceaseless vigilance [...] and will continue to watch, we may presume [...] through all time to come.<sup>23</sup>

For some Americans Taylor was the modern equivalent to the ancient Greek chronicler of the world. "Mr. Taylor, like Longfellow, Tennyson, and Scott, had a gift of looking through the present into the past, and held delightful communion with the old days," one of his contemporaries noted.<sup>24</sup>

One of the most evident illustrations of the passage of time to Americans and Europeans visiting Egypt was the difference they perceived between the evident grandeur of the civilization that had once built these monuments and the peoples that now inhabited the lands. Travelers repeatedly commented on this distinction. The Sunday

school book author Jane A. Eames of New Hampshire, for one, remarked in her diary upon seeing the monuments of Egypt that in “no one place where I have been does the magnificent past stand so closely by the side of the insignificant present, as in Thebes, for here we see the majestic ruins on one hand, and the mud walls of a hovel on the other.”<sup>25</sup>

Taylor’s experiences, as Kendall’s reference to him illustrates, was one of the many filters through which others interpreted this contrast. Readers could not avoid seeing how, as in his descriptions of California and Mexico, Taylor used the less modern cultural and material conditions to illustrate what he believed was the comparative inferiority, or what Kendall called the “semi-barbarism,” of native peoples.<sup>26</sup> “The habitations” of these people Taylor said “resemble ant-hills rather than human dwellings, and the villages are depots of filth and vermin, on the most magnificent scale.”<sup>27</sup>

Taylor’s views were consistent with the spreading belief that the inner nature of a people was expressed in the outer form of their bodies and of their culture. He was drawing a link between race, material development, and historical change. A major reason the ancient past of places like Egypt fascinated Americans was that it placed into perspective the apparent inferiority of the land’s contemporary inhabitants. “I have aimed,” Taylor wrote in the preface to his book on this part of his journey, “at giving representations of the living races which inhabit those countries rather than the old ones which have passed away. I have taken it for granted that the reader will feel more interested—as I was—in a live Arab, than a dead Pharaoh.”<sup>28</sup>

It was from this evidence of change that Europeans and Americans concocted an historical rationale for their sense of superiority. For Taylor, his travels exposed an undisputable connection between history and race. The ebb and flow of civilization

appeared to correspond to the fundamental differences in humans. To Taylor the “congenital” “indifference of the Arab nature” in Egypt explained the present “backward” state of the society. And the existence of social degradation in the shadow of such monumental glory proved that these people were either a different race entirely or the degenerate descendents of the ancient builders. The builders of the ruins of Southern Egypt could not have been the “primitive” Africans.

Those friends of the African Race, who point to Egypt as a proof of what that race has accomplished, are wholly mistaken. The only Negro features represented in Egyptian sculpture are those of slaves and captives taken in the Ethiopian wars of the Pharaohs. [...] [T]here is no evidence in all the valley of the Nile that the Negro Race ever attained a higher degree of civilization than is at present exhibited in Congo and Ashantee.<sup>29</sup>

If the present inhabitant could not have built the grand Ethiopian ruins and Egyptian monuments, who did? The people who constructed them “must indeed have been [...] highly civilized,” and yet “Where are they now?” This was the questions of New Hampshire diarist and fan of the books of John Lloyd Stephens, Julia Dyson, after seeing a large panoramic display of the “stupendous ruins” of Thebes in New York.<sup>30</sup>

These questions and conclusions were hardly contained to travelers. By virtue of its scale, the “panoramic” image of Thebes that Dyson observed, much like the ruins themselves, invoked a sense of wonder about human history. Immediately after viewing this and another historical panorama Dyson rushed home to read Stephens’ Travels in Central America. Stephens’ account of his discovery of Aztec culture, popularized in part through the sketches and showmanship of his fellow explorer and panorama artist John Frederick Catherwood, broached many of the same sorts of historical questions about the course of civilization that also drew Americans to a fascination with Egyptology.<sup>31</sup>

In 1838 Catherwood built a rotunda at the corner of Mercer and Prince Street near Broadway. There he simultaneously showed both the panorama of Thebes that Dyson observed and an even larger painting of Jerusalem. The painting received the endorsement Stephens.<sup>32</sup> The public loved the paintings. A review from the *New York Mirror* expressed the sense of awe they produced.

We hail, with no small interest, the permanent establishment of panoramas in this city. [...] The establishment of Mr. Catherwood, (a gentleman well known throughout the country for those admirable lectures on the land of the East, the result of many observant travels), is on a scale equal to the successive production of a whole series of magnificent panoramic paintings, from original drawings—the most attractive of the whole host of London exhibitions. Nor can we be surprised at this, when we consider that neither the most vivid partial representations of foreign wonders, nor the most accurate and graphic descriptions of them can so fully bring them before us as a well-chosen and well-painted panorama. [...] Nothing can surpass the style in which Jerusalem—that holy city—appealing by its most glorious associations to our kindled imagination, and religious interest—is brought before us. We see at a glance that there is verity, an absence of all exaggeration, in the representation of this mournful but magnificent scene. The state of decay and ruin of the mass of the city, is as faithfully portrayed as the architectural magnificence of the Mosque of Omar. The distant country is invested in the scorched and blasted attributes, which, from the collected testimony of travelers, are proper to it. The sky is that of the sultry orient; the groups of figures, most admirably painted, and in themselves a study, are true to the minutest points of costume and character.<sup>33</sup>

In early April of 1852 Taylor left Egypt for Palestine and Jerusalem. The scenes of this storied land “seemed to pass like a panorama before” the readers of Taylor letters, wrote a fellow journalist. As he traveled on through Nazareth to Damascus an astonishing history arose from the “crumbling fragments.”<sup>34</sup> On May 19<sup>th</sup> on the heights overlooking the “ancient city” of Damascus he sketched an image of himself at rest that would become the basis of a later painting. From there he traveled northward into Anatolia, never it seemed out of the astonishing ruins of the past, and arrived at last in Constantinople in June.

The craze for the visual and written panoramas created by those like Taylor may be partially in response to the kind of historical questions that fascinated Dyson. At Catherwood's rotunda panoramas of other ruins, like Rome, soon followed those of Thebes and Jerusalem. The ruins of Egypt and Rome illustrated the decline that had befallen earlier powers. As Wai-chee Dimock observed, the "word 'empire' engendered not only pride but also anxiety, not only America's hope of unexampled greatness but also its fear of exampled decline."<sup>35</sup> Fear of catastrophe indeed permeated the cultural landscape.<sup>36</sup> Americans may have celebrated the nation's economic and territorial expansion but they also harbored misgivings.

In The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire Edward Gibbon had popularized the idea that empires were cyclical phenomenon. His arguments, like those of Taylor's other favorite historians David Hume and William Robertson, had given an historical explanation for the emergence of the nation, but in the context of the nation's newfound strength his thesis took on more troubling meaning. As Gibbon wrote, in a sentence that must have chilled the hearts of many Americans, the "decline of Rome was the natural and inevitable result of immoderate greatness."<sup>37</sup>

The meaning of empire certainly emerged as a major theme of cultural interest in the late 1830s. Concern over sectional divisions and social transformation helped propel the rise of apocalyptic religious groups, political extremism, and aesthetic expressions of fear like the popular landscape painter Thomas Cole's allegorical cycle "The Course of Empire."<sup>38</sup> This famous series visually illustrated the cycle of empire to American audiences. Deeply influenced by his experience in Italy and following Byron, Cole returned from Europe in 1832 with different artistic ambitions. He shifted his efforts

from painting romantic nature scenes to that of complex allegorical tales preoccupied with the history of man. In the final scene of the series Cole vividly displayed the apocalyptic end to which empires inevitably succumb. In the scene of commercial, urban, and class-ridden society drawn by Cole many spied a vague reflection of the world about them. Despite the historical disguise Cole had thrown over it, most could see a society that they knew all too well. What gave the painting its emotional intensity, in other words, was the recognition by viewers that America was coming to resemble not the bygone Empires of the ancient past but the Europe of today.<sup>39</sup> One could also place the fascination with panoramas like Catherwood's "Ruins of Thebes" which invoked in observers like Julia Dyson the sense of perplexity that the great peoples who built them could come to such a mysterious but clearly dismal end.<sup>40</sup>

The popularity of Cole's allegorical cycle revealed that while many Americans celebrated both economic and territorial expansion they also harbored misgivings. Travel writers added to these fears of decline with their ruminations over ancient ruins. Americans were set wondering about the future of their own nation by travel writings like that of the physician Valentine Mott who, before the decaying monuments of Egypt, asked if America, "to which seems to be assigned the destiny to become the inheritors of [...] mental and of moral culture," may in due course decline and find civilization "depart" it, perhaps "to be revived once more in that benighted Eastern Asia."<sup>41</sup>

### **Reassuring Traces of Anglo-Saxon Greatness**

In the winter of 1852 while Taylor's Tribune letters stoked the historical imaginations of William Kendell, Jane A. Eames, and Julia Dyson they also fostered a reassuring message as well. Taylor like other travel writers easily turned the wonder

associated with places like the ancient ruins of Thebes or the decaying environs of Jerusalem into arguments supporting the Caucasians' and in particular the Anglo-Saxons' historical destiny. In the intellectual atmosphere of the day few other explanations appeared able to answer the question Dyson and others were asking. The question itself was symptomatic of the linkage between culture and race assumed by many. By asking the question in the way she did, Dyson validated the emerging racial theory of civilization by assuming an immutable relationship between a culture and a people. In the account of his travels to the Near East, the Minister and Egyptologist Joseph Parrish Thompson argued that before the ruins of Karnack "all history, all empire, and all time swept through my wondering soul" making clear that the "shivering shrinking Arabs" that lived amid the hovels surrounding Karnack were at best but the degenerate remains of the great people who built it.<sup>42</sup>

By mid-century most Americans had little doubt about the answer to such questions. Scholars, Taylor explained, have "established beyond a doubt" that the inferior art of the ancient Ethiopians was adopted from the more advanced Egyptians.

Starting from Memphis [...] the era of civilization becomes later, as you ascend the Nile. [...] Egypt, therefore, was not civilized from Ethiopia, but Ethiopia from Egypt. [...] [Finally], the ancient Ethiopians, though of a darker complexion than the Egyptians (as they are in fact represented, in Egyptian sculpture), were, like them, an offshoot of the great Caucasian race.

This fact pointed, Taylor asserted, to "what is of still greater significance" concerning human history: "the knowledge that the highest Civilization, in every age of the world, has been developed by the race," by which he meant the Anglo-Saxon, "to which we belong." Westerners also sought to co-opt Egypt's glorious past. Kendall depicts time as a vast unbroken pageant. The conclusions reassured Americans of their superiority over

the existing inhabitants of other lands; it also provided the basis for an even grander inflation of Anglo-Saxons' importance to history.<sup>43</sup>

The wonders they left behind were all the result of the Caucasian, whose ingenuity and energy created these empires before the dynamic spirit of that race moved further west. What remained were the degenerate remnants of this great people. All of these views about the racial theory of history suggested that travel eastward would be a literal journey backward through a chain of failed civilizations, back along the course of cultural and technological evolution, towards the earliest history of the Caucasian race. That voyage, undertaken by travel writers and their readers, revealed a world history in which the rise of the Anglo-Saxon peoples was depicted as the culminating event of the westward course of civilization. But experiences along the path of civilization also pointed to, in a continuation of that trend, an emerging future of Anglo-Saxon, and therefore a shared English and American, world domination. Taylor's journey into the further East combined these two narratives.

At the center of the story was the British Empire. News that his request to join Perry expedition to Japan would be taken seriously by the Commodore, Taylor decided to travel to China. After a jaunt back through Italy, Germany, and Spain, Taylor set sail for India via Egypt and the Suez in early December. In the next several months as he passed through the colonial possession of Great Britain he began to reflect on the role that nation was playing in the east.

Beyond Constantinople, Taylor described a succession of mysterious and enticing vistas of decay of the kind that captured the imagination of many Americans and turned their thoughts to the contemplation of historical civilization. In Taylor's hands however

the same scenes invoked the persistent role of the Caucasian in the movement of civilization westward.

All civilized races, however far they may have wandered from their original seats, and become colonizers of distant shores, always retain a sort of reverence and awe for the name of Asia. They are accustomed to look upon her as the oldest of Continents, and the cradle of the human race. [...] In the dawn of the world, as in that of the solar day, we turn to the East for light; but like one who travels eastward, in the delusion that he will thus reach the sun itself, we are led from point to point, farther and farther to the East, until among the mists of the Himalayas we lose sight of the foot-prints of tradition.

“The course of my travels happened to retrace,” in effect, “very nearly, the course of ancient history,” Taylor told audiences in his lecture,” hence that of Caucasian greatness.<sup>44</sup>

The lesson Taylor conveyed in his travels was that while empires created by the Caucasian do fall, the power of the race is resistant to decay and persists through time. In India he divined more signs of this fact. Leaving Bombay he traveled by mail cart to Delhi and then on to Calcutta. As Taylor traveled further into India he described landscape that appeared to grow increasingly remote from the time and land from which he came.

There is a vast difference between the forest in India and a forest in America. This is not only a new country, but it looks new. The sky, and the air and the sunshine are as clear, and fresh, and bright, as if they had been just made to order; while in India, they give you the impression of having been in use a long time. There, you can scarcely take up a handful of earth without disturbing the ashes of dead generations.

The scenery, Taylor explained, gave off “the impression of great antiquity.” “Penetrate the thin crust” imposed on it by the West and “you are soon lost in winding, dusty avenues, lined with the mean and narrow dwellings of the lower classes of the native population” that revealed the ancient, decaying state of the society.<sup>45</sup>

The complexity of Indian civilization suggested to him both its ancient history and its Caucasian heritage as well. For this reason “I never approached any land with such an interest and excitement, as India” Taylor told audiences. It held an intrinsic fascination as one of the closest nations to the supposed origins of the Caucasian race. Following the Orientalist arguments of British scholars like Charles Wilkins and Sir William Jones, German romantics, and American transcendentalists, Taylor praised the advancement in literature and philosophy Indians attained long before the earliest civilizations of Europe. And he insisted that the lingering racial superiority of the original Caucasian still gave Indians many high qualities.<sup>46</sup>

Nevertheless, it was evident to Taylor that the original Caucasians had become hopelessly corrupted by the semi-tropical climate. Today, he concluded, they fall short of the “other civilized races” because “they lack energetic, practical talent” characteristic of Caucasians necessary in order to “stand long against the pressure of more active and ambitious races.”<sup>47</sup> They are a “mild, gentle” people “naturally disposed to indolence” and “look with horror upon all violence.”<sup>48</sup> The vigor of their Caucasian blood had been corrupted by interbreeding with the inferior people of the region. The culture that now existed there was reflection of retrogression. “It is easy to understand how their religious belief grew into existence,” proclaims Taylor, “since it is but a colossal and distorted reflection of their own character.” Nothing remained exempt from Taylor’s cultural reductionism.

[t]he beef-eating Englishman, with no more natural intellectual capacity than a Hindoo, elbows his way all over the world, and wherever he sets his foot, there he holds his ground. [. . .] The meek Hindoo, living on rice and vegetables, cannot even remain master on his own soil, though outnumbering his conquerors at the rate of 2000 to one.

Their “vegetarianism” was but another “shadowy reflection” of their passive natures and was “fatal to physical strength and energy.” Indeed, they have “little physical bravery and the forms of crime common among the lower classes are all of the most treacherous and cowardly nature.”<sup>49</sup> Here as elsewhere those making claims of white racial superiority obsessed over the crudest form of mastery: they interpreted the West’s propensity for aggression as a racial strength. And, as Taylor did, they attempted to rationalize these claims with reference to the flimsiest of cultural differences.

For Taylor, China was the exception that proved the rule in his belief that Caucasians were central to the rise of civilization. After a short visit to the edge of the Himalayas, Taylor left Calcutta for China in February passing through Penang, Singapore, before arriving in Hong Kong on March 16<sup>th</sup> 1853. Taylor already harbored a bad impression of the Chinese from observing immigrants in New York and California. According to Taylor nothing in the languid decay of India prepared him for what he encountered in China. The “dull,” “expressionless,” and “sensual” faces of the Chinese “filled me with an unconquerable aversion” he wrote. In the environs around Canton he described an imploding civilization.

A Chinese city is the greatest of all abominations, and one ceases to wonder at the physical deformity, or the monstrous forms of licentiousness, which are to be found among the lower classes of the natives, when he has seen the manner in which they live.<sup>50</sup>

To Taylor the Chinese were the physical embodiment of sensual corruption diametrically opposite to the myth of Caucasian stoicism and closely associated Christian interpretation of self-control. Taylor saw no signs that the Chinese were in any way related to Caucasians. They were to him an entirely separate and inferior race.

Drafted into part of the commission intended to negotiate with the Taiping rebels who threatened the Western treaty ports, Taylor traveled inland and as in India the journey took him back in time. Here, however, once he moved away from the foreign influenced city of Canton his transition into the past was more abrupt and alien. He conveys this sense by injecting the scenes with a pervasive mood of weirdness and fear that makes one wonder whether, as he implies, the Chinese are at all related to other humans. The “degradation is almost without parallel,” Taylor reports, amid that “nest of human vermin,” the tent cities of the refugees fleeing the war. Everywhere he traveled he appeared transfixed by the “vile, wild looking” and “stupid faces” of the people.

It is my deliberate opinion that the Chinese are, morally, the most debased people on the face of the earth. Forms of vice which in other countries are barely named, are in China so common, that they excite not comment among the natives. They constitute the surface-level, and below them there are deeps on deeps of depravity so shocking and horrible, that their character cannot even be hinted.<sup>51</sup>

His private opinions were no less vitriolic. Aboard Perry’s flagship but still in the harbor of Macao, he confessed to his friend George Boker:

China I hope never to see again. These people lack all sense of art, and their most celebrated productions are at best but labored monstrosities. I have taken an inveterate disgust to them, and shall rejoice greatly when I see their stupid, impassive, yellow visages for the last time.<sup>52</sup>

China was, in short, the opposite of everything Taylor prized as American and himself. The Chinese appeared to lack the drive for personal and moral improvement, as well as the psychological hunger for uniqueness and liberty so central to Taylor’s own romance of self.

Taylor’s opinions of the Chinese were heavily influenced by views of them learned in his youth. Beginning in the early nineteenth-century respect for China’s Confucian state, its peaceful policies, and its fine handicrafts had suffered successive

blows. The spread of opium usage, social unrest, and subsequent military defeat at the hands of Western powers crippled those idealized notions of the Celestial Empire. Added to this an increasingly long line of merchants, missionaries, and diplomats who, with typical Western hubris expected to have their own way in China but were frustrated, painted successively darker images. One of the most famous of the critics that Taylor read was the self-made Englishman John Barrow. What offended Barrow was Chinese indifference to bourgeois values. In Travels in China Barrow condemned their failure to pursue liberal virtues of deferred gratification, self-interest, and personal improvement. These were qualities that Taylor associated with what he called “progressive civilization.” As a consequence China appeared to stand for the opposite of those qualities which were believed to have made the Caucasian west great. The antithetical racial difference with Caucasians was often illustrated by pointing-out the variety of ways in which Chinese behavior and taste were literally the opposite of western custom.<sup>53</sup>

From Barrow, Taylor and others drew the conclusion that China’s problems were not the fault of Western depredations but the inferior racial character of its people. To Taylor the “grotesque” nature of Chinese culture and their refusal to acknowledge that they had much to learn from the West reflected the innate incapacity of the people toward self-improvement or self-government. “So imbecile and absurd a court as that of China never before governed a great empire,” he wrote. Like other Americans he was repelled by what he saw as their rigid traditionalism so contrary to the spirit of his own culture. He assumed the inflexibility was racially congenital, “in China, where the race has remained stationary for two thousand years, you are oppressed with the feeling of the universal stagnation which prevails.” “The progressive spirit,” he continued, “seems to

be utterly paralyzed.”<sup>54</sup> The liberal-Protestant individualist culture of the United States viewed this personal apathy as a sign of deep moral corruption. “The Chinese are, morally,” Taylor concluded, “the most debased people on the face of the earth.”<sup>55</sup>

The mental inertia of the people seems to be almost hopeless of improvement. Even while the present rebellion is going on—a struggle which, we would suppose, would enlist their sympathies, if a single spark of patriotism or ambition remained—the great mass of the people maintain the most profound apathy.<sup>56</sup>

Within a nation born out of revolution and still governed by a republican ideology of social responsibility, this apparent indifference was a clear indication of social decay.

### **The Anglo-Saxon Mission of Revitalization**

While the letters written by Taylor during his Far East travels continued to chronicle the central role of the Caucasian in the past, they also told three other interrelated stories: an account of the British and American partnership in the return of Anglo-Saxon vitality to the Far East; a condemnation of the predatory nature of British Empire; and an explanation of the difference between British and American Empire. The arrival of British Empire in Asia was pointed to as evidence that the Caucasians’ journey “westward around the earth” had been nearly completed. Looking at Asia one sees a “remarkable contrast” between “the Alpha and Omega of Human Civilization,” Taylor exclaimed.<sup>57</sup> The “red sea” of English rule (referring to the color of ink used on maps to designate the dominion of Great Britain) has inundated “one principality after another, till island after island is blotted out” in India. That “red sea will ere long cover with its waves every foot of ground between Affghanistan [sic] and China,” wrote Taylor. Soon the “colonies” of the Anglo-Saxon will reach their “original cradle.”<sup>58</sup>

In light of the Asians’ incapacity, to many the spread of British Empire seemed a boon. The shared sense of mission which came with this discourse was a significant

factor in the emergent Anglo-American sense of unity. The need for the Anglo-Saxon to rejuvenate other peoples was further proof of the racial theory of civilization. The English-speaking peoples of the world were destined to preside over a global empire because they were the best fit to govern. To American travelers the relative affinity between themselves and the English confirmed their brotherhood with the dominant race, and the United States' eventual destiny to become an imperial power of its own. The shared sense of mission was a significant factor in this Anglo-American sense of unity. As Taylor explained to audiences in the years after his return to the United States, the American and Englishmen were being united by the sheer fact that the "magnitude" of Asia's problems required the "attention of the whole Anglo-Saxon race." In other words, they shared a self-serving belief that they were destined to fix what seemed to them to be "a problem."<sup>59</sup>

The spirit of this Anglo-Americanism was captured during the 1850s in the sentiments of the then-celebrated shipping magnate and world traveler George Francis Train. His extensive series of letters under the title of "Young America Abroad" was written for the New York Herald. "Young America is," Train proclaimed, "only another edition of Old England, the junior partner, if you will, who manages the western branch of the old concern." He went on:

Meet an Englishman in a foreign soil, where the habits, customs and religion of the native shows absence of civilization, where the mind is even darker than the skin, and the American tourist is sure to hail him as a brother.<sup>60</sup>

This shift to a metaphor of sibling relationship, rather than the maternal paradigm so commonly used earlier, emphasized the emerging American sense of equality with England. Indeed, the language of brotherhood had gained momentum decades before in

the defensive allegorical burlesque The Diverting History of John Bull and Brother Jonathan, written by James Kirke Paulding.<sup>61</sup> By the late 1850s this fraternal simile had already become a cliché. Sensationalist travel writers like John Williamson Palmer satirized the fellowship of Anglo-Saxon people, intimating that there was more cant than connection in the talk of union.

Still, as is suggested by the admiration that percolates in Palmer's account of his service as a surgeon aboard a frigate in Her Majesty's Navy during the Burma Wars, there was much in the awesome power of British Empire for Americans to want to claim for themselves. It was not England alone that had spread civilization, Americans suggested. Rather, as Train liked to assert, it was together that "our sixty millions of Anglo-Saxons delight in astonishing the eight hundred millions of aboriginals which the world contains." To many the technological and economic superiority of westerns over Africans, Arabs, Indians, and Chinese demonstrated the innate racial superiority of Caucasians. Earlier, he observed that trade and technology were the key tools by which the Anglo-Saxon would "revolutionize, commercialize and naturalize the Celestials." He also thought trade and technology would "work a moral change in India."<sup>62</sup> As Taylor explained to audiences "the whole Anglo-Saxon race" was being united by the sheer "magnitude" of Asia's problems. Taylor repeatedly invoked an image of the Anglo-Saxons' revitalizing influence. At Aden, "facing the most savage and inhospitable region of Africa," he wrote:

I never felt more forcibly the power of that civilization which follows the Anglo-Saxon race in all its conquests and takes root in whatever corner of the world the race sets its foot. [...] Herein consists the true power and grandeur of the race, and the assurance of its final supremacy.<sup>63</sup>

The story of a shared redemptive mission by Anglo-Saxon brothers shaped the views of fans. On his own visit to Aden, New York merchant Robert B. Minturn purposefully echoed Taylor's comments:

[Taylor's words] express so truly my feelings, and what I believe ought to be the feelings of every member of the Anglo-Saxon race, as he looks upon the progress of that mighty power which is spreading our laws, our liberty, our civilization, and our religion into the furthest bounds of the habitable world.<sup>64</sup>

In Taylor's view, the rejuvenating influence of the Caucasian was even more apparent in India. There, the "intelligent native families" of Calcutta had in the spirit of their rebirth taken to calling themselves "young Bengal."<sup>65</sup> The East India Company has "devoted large sums to public works" such as canals, highways, irrigation, telegraphs, railroads, schools and universities. "We can already see a faint dawn along the borders of that night of superstition which for twenty centuries has lain like a pall upon [India]." "I do not believe," Taylor argued, "that the energies of the native races of India have wholly decayed."<sup>66</sup> For "the present, and for generations to come, probably," he told lecture audiences, "India is more fortunate under English rule than she would be under that of her own princes. There is a constant infusion of Saxon strength and energy into her effete life."<sup>67</sup>

Readers of most travel accounts about British rule, even if they did not support empire, could not help at some level to admire the achievement of their fellow Anglo-Saxons. Men like Indianapolis businessman Calvin Fletcher, no friend of imperialism, spoke in awe of British strength after reading William Hodson's Twelve Years of a Soldier's Life in India an account of his service and experiences during the events of the 1857 Indian revolt. Speaking of Hodson, Fletcher wrote, "He was a man well suited to

the great occasion. Brave & determined & a fine constitution” for they had “to die or conquer in each engagement.”<sup>68</sup>

Many held that China too benefited from the steady hand of Anglo-Saxon rule. Its commercial relations with the world, these advocates pointed out, had grown rapidly following the country’s defeats in the Opium wars. Indeed, these wars were, James Gordon Bennett told the readers of his paper, “another movement of Anglo-Saxon spirit in the remotest east, against the barriers of the semi-barbarian and half-civilized races, who have been stationary for twenty centuries or more.”<sup>69</sup> Privately, men of very different political sympathies, like Philadelphia diarist Sidney George Fisher, felt the same: “The timid and ignorant Chinese cannot resist the courage and warlike skill and superior machinery of the English, and the Celestial Empire will be at last opened to the enterprise and commerce of the victorious Anglo-Saxon race.”<sup>70</sup>

In short, under the influence of travel lectures and writings the cause of progressive civilization seemed a reasonable justification for empire to most Americans, whether they were Democratic expansionists like Bennett or more cautious Whigs like Fisher. Although lamentable, British Empire was seen as a natural, necessary, and positive development in which a stronger, energetic, and hence more aggressive people extended their sway over the inferior. Many of critics of British Empire failed to comprehend this fact, according to Taylor.

Some advocate of universal peace has cited China as the example of a nation which has successfully pursued a pacific policy, but I say, welcome be the thunder-storm which shall scatter and break up, though by means of fire and blood, this terrible stagnation!<sup>71</sup>

Taylor devoted most of his lecture “India,” which he gave hundreds times, elucidating the often “confusing nature” and meaning of British rule in that country. Caught-up in the

beginning of our own inevitable expansion, “Who are we, that we should cast a stone against this sin?” unless we understand the challenge—what would later be called the “white man’s burden.”<sup>72</sup>

“We in the United States,” Taylor told audiences, “have almost forgotten that there must be another side to the picture” of Empire. The ignorance and passivity of the native peoples of India and China have forced upon the English many of the actions they have taken. Indians are people “accustomed to” despotism; they even “desire it. “I do not hesitate to say that an impartial balance-sheet will show a preponderance in the Company’s favor; and that the results promised in the future [...] show that the natives have gained by the change of masters.”<sup>73</sup> Just as the Mexican recognized the superiority of the American, so the Indian of the subcontinent viewed the English. “The natives show that spontaneous honor [...] which the weak always renders to the strong.” But in no other country are these “tokens of subjection so complete.” “All these tokens of submission did not originate with the English sway,” Taylor asserted. “They [...] are inseparable from the nature of the [Indian] race. It would be just as difficult to abolish them among the Hindoos, as it would be to establish them among us.”<sup>74</sup>

The ferocity with which travelers like Taylor defended the Anglo-Saxon’s right to domination reflects the argument’s importance to the belief in America’s imperial destiny. America’s westward drive across the continent was, in the context of this racial theory of civilization, another link in the movement of civilization westward. In a quote that captured the mood of the day, The American Whig asserted:

Mexico was poor, distracted, in anarchy, and almost in ruins—what could she do to stay the hand of our power, to impede the march of greatness? We are Anglo-Saxon Americans; it was our ‘destiny’ to possess and to rule this continent—we

were bound to it! We were a chosen people, and this was our allotted inheritance, and we must drive out all other nations before us!<sup>75</sup>

Generations of American leaders had eyed Asia as the inevitable end of the nation's commercial expansion. Now, after the conquest of California, as the Secretary of the Treasury Robert J. Walter said, "Asia has suddenly become our neighbor with a placid, intervening ocean inviting our steamships upon the track of commerce greater than that of all Europe combined."<sup>76</sup>

Thus when the proponents for expansion were talking about the annexation of California, many of them had in fact even greater imperial ambitions. For some the conquest of California was but a penultimate step. While listening to the constitutional convention, Taylor heard a telling example of the way California was thought to play a role in a much larger drama. California, one of the delegates argued, should be a large state because:

no other portion of the globe will exercise a greater influence upon the civilization and commerce of the world. The people of California will penetrate the hitherto inaccessible portions of Asia, carrying with them not only the arts and sciences, but the refining and purifying influence of civilization and Christianity; they will unlock the vast resources of the East, and, by reversing the commerce of the world, pour the riches of India into the metropolis of the new State.<sup>77</sup>

The thoughts and plans of the nation's governing elite were undoubtedly influenced by the comments of travelers like Taylor who proclaimed his pride "that the Empire of the West, the commerce of the great Pacific, the new highway to the Indies, forming the last link in that belt of civilized enterprise which now clasps the world, has been established under my country's flag."<sup>78</sup> According to the Democratic Review, Americans were destined to not only conquer the West but "to carry back to Asia the refinement of art and

the influences of Christianity, gathered in a journey of two thousand years around the world, from east to west.”<sup>79</sup>

In early May of 1853 the American squadron arrived in Shanghai and Taylor was mustered aboard Perry’s flagship the U.S.S. Mississippi as a part of the crew. Taylor took the “demotion” lightly. “I am to accompany the expedition to Japan, in the capacity of—imagine it if you can!—master’s mate! with a salary of \$300 a year, and six dollars a month for rations. Oh, what a falling off! From the attaché of an embassy to master’s mate on board of man of war.”<sup>80</sup> But it would be part of history. Perry’s arrival in Japan would complete the westward circle of empire. Sent by President Millard Fillmore to secure “friendship, commerce, a supply of coal and provisions, and protection of our shipwrecked people,” Perry’s expedition became as much a symbolic as practical event. In later characterizing his efforts as an “attempt to bring a singular and isolated people into the family of civilized nations,” Perry himself revealed how his actions were shaped by a larger vision of history.<sup>81</sup>

As part what Taylor termed the “ruling race,” Americans were compelled by their nature and the inevitable logic of history to the shores of the island kingdom. As a member of Perry’s crew, Taylor had a unique view upon the events. After his return he framed Perry’s venture as a moral obligation. Those who opposed as an “outrage” the endeavor “to break up such [Japanese] exclusiveness” he explained, simply do not understand history. “Destiny does not pause to consider these questions,” he asserted.<sup>82</sup> Elsewhere he explained, it was a simple fact:

that Civilization which is now going abroad over the whole Earth emanates entirely from the later races—the newest seats of Empire. It moves East only by the contact of these races; it does not spring up spontaneously and blossom in that stagnant air. In less than a century it has brought India [...] to its feet: it has

forcibly beaten down the walls of Japan. It is not for us to say that it were better for mankind if this had not happened. Civilization must work out its own grand and inevitable destiny; and the result must always be good, in spite of the evil which precedes it. If we look deeper than the surface, we cannot but be convinced that all the great historical movements of the world are in accordance with the designs of an all-wise Providence.<sup>83</sup>

This similarity led him to believe that “[i]n the fall of Peru, we may perhaps see a foreshadowing of the fall of Japan.” The Japanese distrust one another, but might place “confidence in a foreign leader”:

[a]mong our citizens on the western coast there is a restless thirst for adventure, which has had no parallel since the days of the Spanish discovery, and they are already casting lingering eyes towards the great semi-civilized empire which lies opposite them, and seems to invite their enterprise.

Among them may be a “skillful adventurer” able to conquer Japan. “Let her only yield ground enough for one Anglo-Saxon man to set his feet upon” Japanese ground and the “days of her Despotism are numbered.” Taylor’s analogy reveals the influence of his friend Prescott’s history of Peru, wherein the historian compares the Spanish to the Anglo-Saxon. In that work, as in Taylor’s lecture, it is the Anglo-Saxon who possesses a special relationship to the unfolding of history.<sup>84</sup>

With these comments Taylor encapsulated the role that the confused racist justification of empire assumed within the complex discursive tensions of American culture. His arguments emphasized the importance of individual will and self-determination, values at the heart of the liberal-Christian and nascent Social Darwinism of the day, but by fiat of racial determinism preserved the Christian inspired expectations of the nation’s pre-destined role to rule the world. It was for this reason that readers like Indianapolis businessman Calvin Fletcher sometimes closely linked readings of exploration with what he termed “a deeper religious sense than usual.”<sup>85</sup>

To Taylor the explorer and adventurer was an agent of history. For him travel into unknown worlds was intimately linked to a nationalist agenda: the mapping, naming, and factual digestion of nature that accompanied journeys into the blank spaces on the globe represented a sort of metaphoric mastery over the physical world. The expansion of geographic knowledge signified conquest over the untamed savagery of nature, a victory for civilized morality, and the advance of both spiritual as well as material progress. Interpreted in this fashion travel and exploration served to justify claims of racial superiority, right to empire, and national supremacy.

Taylor's was part of a generation of American explorers described in heroic terms that emphasized their collection of knowledge about the world. Their exploits permitted the public to perceive the United States as a legitimate rival to Great Britain's leadership in global progress. In the mid-nineteenth century American papers like Bennett's World and Greeley's Tribune aggressively celebrated the accomplishments of American explorers.<sup>86</sup> The frequent mention in the writings of Taylor's contemporaries during the 1840s of the much publicized exploits of John Lloyd Stephens and John Charles Fremont illustrates the attention that the press coverage produced. As a young man Taylor devoured the reports of the travels of these men and earlier American explorers like John Ledyard. In the 1850s, as the golden era of African and Arctic exploration was beginning, American papers focused on the accomplishments of their own countrymen. In the coming years men such as the African explorers Charles de Chaillu and Henry Morton Stanley, and Arctic explorers Elisha Kent Kane and Charles Francis Hall succeeded in making their fortune by filling this role. In the case of Stanley and Hall the story behind their travels were metonymic of America's emerging role relative to England. Both

followed in the steps of British explorers, David Livingston and John Franklin, whom they hoped to find, save, and in effect surpass in achievement.

With his own journey to the East, Taylor too was cast by the Tribune and other papers as an icon of the nation's coming greatness. Commencing with his journey into southern Egypt and his purported objective of discovering the origins of the White Nile, the northern tributary of the great river, Taylor began to build a reputation as an explorer of unknown lands.

In this atmosphere it must have been difficult to resist the temptation to wrap oneself in the glory of heroic travel. On one hand there was the seductive sense of empowerment produced by imagining oneself as a brave explorer. On the other hand there was the popular adulation it brought. For the public, explorers were the material embodiment of the collective ambitions of the nation. Seen as producers of progress they were symbols of the nation's unique position relative to the future. Bourgeois readers like Calvin Fletcher and his sons closely watched the movement of Western explorers, particularly those from the United States like Elijah Kent Kane, whose travails convinced Fletcher "that the cowardly die many deaths but the brave & courageous live longer & suffer less."<sup>87</sup> Fletcher paid particular attention to the travels of Taylor who he made frequent comment about in his diaries. During Taylor's 1857 exploration to the edge of the Arctic regions north of Scandinavian countries Fletcher wrote with pride that the adventure represented "a new era in travel."<sup>88</sup>

Explorers were also the flag bearers of Caucasian racial superiority. "The experience of travelers proves that this supremacy is instinctively felt by all other races," Taylor told audiences.

Livingstone, Barth, Burton, and Du Chaillu penetrated the wildest recesses of Africa, and the respect which they inspired is like an invulnerable shield for their protection. No one supposes that a Mongolian, a Malay, or an American Indian could safely accomplish the same explorations.<sup>89</sup>

Conjoined, these qualities made the explorer immensely popular and in some instance almost messianic figures. Two of the most popular moving panoramas of the day, for instance, were narratives fashioned round the lives of Fremont and Kane.

Christening the vessel that he used to travel past Khartoum the “John Ledyard,” Taylor was linking himself to this tradition of American explorers.<sup>90</sup> The Tribune pumped this angle for all it was worth. The nation’s other major dailies did their part to build an image of Taylor as an explorer. Letters from home informed Taylor of what was being written. Philadelphia papers were all abuzz, his mother reported, “that he is going to the source of the Nile, where no [white] man has gone before.” She hoped he was being careful.<sup>91</sup> Later in life, after most of his travels were behind him, Taylor confessed “that while floating upon the waters of the White Nile, while roaming through the pine forests of Phrygia or over the hills of Loo-Choo[Taiwan], I learned to feel the passion of the Explorer.”<sup>92</sup> That Taylor thought of his tromp across Loo-Choo as exploration was evident by the importance he attached to the loss of his notes. Without them his account would not be as detailed he wished, but “like John Ledyard, in a precisely similar case, I shall have the alternative of an unusually tenacious memory.”<sup>93</sup>

In Taylor the spirit of wonder and romantic self-posturing were clearly mixed with a calculated attempt to exploit for the purposes of fame nationalistic sentiments. To be fair, he did try hard to extract useful information from his travels. In the time-honored manner of such eighteenth century scientific explorers as Bouganville, Cook, and Humboldt, he sought to provide detailed information, or facts, about the places he visited.

He proclaimed this Enlightenment project of mastering nature to be the “nobler aim of travel.”<sup>94</sup> The accumulation and cataloging of facts represented to some a gradual assertion of control over nature. Taylor’s African journals, for instance, record his daily measurement of the temperature and detailed description of the flora and fauna through which he passed.<sup>95</sup>

To this end Taylor cultivated the persona of an objective observer. “What a world of traveler’s prejudices I have read” he wrote on his first journey abroad, “one can know nothing of a country from the outside” unless an “objective faculty” was applied to description.<sup>96</sup> In one of his earliest books he announced his departure from the poetic travel writings he admired and had indulged in during the past for the practical responsibility to “confirm or illustrate the evidence” already provided by others. It was “a duty” to “endeavor to impart as much instruction as amusement to the reader” by avoiding “embellishment” and poetry.<sup>97</sup>

As in other matters, however, Taylor was of two minds regarding his image as a scientific explorer. Periodically he disavowed any claim to the title. In the preface to A Journey to Central Africa penned in 1854 he stated that finding the source of the White Nile was never his intention.<sup>98</sup> Later he argued that reflection opened “my eyes to the many requirements” it took to be a scientific traveler and his inadequacy for the role.

With a view of properly qualifying myself for the work [as an explorer], I made a collection of the narratives of the noted travelers of all ages, from Herodotus to Humboldt. [...] [Yet] the more I dipped into anthropological and ethnological works, the more I became convinced that I could not hope to be of service unless I should drop all other purposes and plans, and give my life wholly to the studies upon which those sciences are based.<sup>99</sup>

Still, the allure of exploration “continued to affect my plans” he explained. As late as 1856 he decided “to combine a winter and summer trip to the Artic Zone [northern edge

of Scandinavia] with my design of studying the Scandinavian races and languages: the former was meant as a counterpart to my previous experiences in tropical lands.” They were part, he said, of his grand plan to study the effects of “soil and climate” on the races of man.<sup>100</sup>

Whatever doubts he may have had about his claims to be a true explorer, however, the traveler was himself not shy about trumpeting nationalist symbolism with which his journey could be freighted. He proudly relates the fact he was the first American to unfurl the stars and stripes along the waters of the White Nile. “The flag of one’s country is never dearer to him,” he wrote, “than when it is his companion and protector in foreign lands.”<sup>101</sup> Local dignitaries, he reported, were eager for him to tell them about the United States. He informed one local ruler in Timbuctoo that he had been dispatched by a “Sultan of my land to obtain information of the countries of Asia; that I wrote in a book accounts of everything I saw, and on my return, would present this book to the Sultan, who would reward me with a high rank—perhaps even that of Grand Vizier.”<sup>102</sup> Of course, while he passes the story off as a joke this is precisely what Taylor in fact fantasized would happen. Elsewhere he made sure to exaggerate the power of the United States. He needed to do so he argued in order to better measure up given the local standards of hyperbole. In truth, however, he and his American readers needed little encouragement to exaggerate their self-importance. In all, his pride at being the nation’s *de facto* representative was evident.

It was as a member of Perry’s expedition to Japan that the nationalistic elements of his image as an explorer and the relationship of that to the imperialist dimensions of such ventures became explicit. The objective of Perry’s voyage was to create a beach-

head for American empire in the East that would allow it to compete against its rival Great Britain. Perry himself viewed his diplomatic mission to Japan as part of the preparations for what he believed to be the inevitable conflict between England and the United States over Asian supremacy. A fervent supporter of Manifest Destiny, Perry exacted concessions from the rulers of the Ryukyus and Bonin Islands intended to facilitate the establishment of coaling facilities in preparation for this Anglo-American war.<sup>103</sup> Leading the party surveying Loo-Choo, Taylor was gathering knowledge on an island that was being strongly considered as an important means of strengthening the capacity of the Pacific fleet.

Later, after his return, Taylor's "exploration" of Loo-Choo and "search" for the source of the White Nile earned him an invitation to join the American Geographical Society. The organization of scientists was first established in 1851 as a version of the older English Geographical Society. Like its parent in London, however, its members did not distinguish very greatly between the scientific pursuit of geographic knowledge and the endeavors of empire. A year before, Appleton in its just published Complete Atlas of the World observed, when we "seek a full and rational solution to the question, 'What is the earth?' we find that geography, instead of being a single restricted science, involves the whole body of merely human knowledge; that is, all which we can learn and know, distinct from direct inspiration of the Almighty." Geography reflects a comprehensive understanding of the earth and man that draws upon the sciences "grounded on human observation and experience."<sup>104</sup> Explorers achieved this at the expense of great personal effort. Taylor's actions on the Loo-Choo islands displayed, as one observer put it, that he

was a hearty and preserving explorer. He pushed into the interior of an unknown jungle, intent on finding new flowers, new minerals, or new animals. He

ascended every mountain which was accessible, and ventured into every cave that could be reached by foot or boat.<sup>105</sup>

But just as Taylor's explorations were ultimately driven by the aims of American national expansion, the objective of the new society, according to its founding charter, was the accumulation and dissemination of such knowledge for the purposes of facilitating progress and mastering nature. It soon became dedicated to the encouragement and promotion of American Empire.

Another example of this intersection between travel, providence, science, and empire can be seen in the life of James Cooley Fletcher, the first son of Calvin Fletcher. After finishing his studies in Switzerland James spent four years as a missionary in Rio de Janeiro, returning home briefly to amass a collection of the "arts, sciences, and literature" of the United States to present to the Emperor of Brazil. He also took with him details laid-out by his father for construction of railroad.<sup>106</sup> When he returned in the United States he presented lectures on Brazil at the Smithsonian, a portion of which was published in Indianapolis Daily Journal, and later spoke before the London Geographical Society.<sup>107</sup> During these years he also published an article in the New York Observer, what Calvin Fletcher described as "a very good description of his journey in the interior of Brazil," and co-authored what became a highly regarded study Brazil and the Brazilians.<sup>108</sup> The book was hailed by the Providence [R. I.] Journal as a valuable source of "correct" and "statistical" information on Brazil.

His efforts last year to introduce many of the works of the useful and beautiful arts of our country into Brazil were eminently successful, and his accomplishment of uniting in amicable relations the leading scientific and literary societies of Brazil [...] gave him friends who became interested in giving him authentic information in regard to a country of which we know less than the interior of China.<sup>109</sup>

The missionary, merchant and explorer Taylor asserted were the spearhead of the civilization and empire. The explorer, he said, was the first to subject the native to “that superior intelligence which renders the brute creation unable to bear the gaze of a human eye” and thus serves as both “the defense of civilized man against the barbarian” and basis of domination.<sup>110</sup> Just as in landscape painting, seeing an object amounted to a projection of power over it. As Jean Paul Sartre later argued, one’s gaze robbed the object of its subjectivity. In the mid-nineteenth century this claim to visual domination was given pseudo-scientific legitimacy both by the theory of mesmerism, a subject I will discuss in a later chapter, and the broader claims of empirical science. For Taylor the gaze was raced: the presumed power of the “superior” white man’s gaze linked the act of scientific travel to the racial theory of empire.

### **The Imperial Rivalry between Britain and the United States**

The second story told in Taylor’s Far Eastern letters focused on the difference between British and American Empire. His letters alternate between equating and then distancing the imperial future of the United States with the present accomplishments of Great Britain. While the spirit of Anglo-Saxonism and the westward course of civilization drew Americans into connection with the glory of Britain’s global hegemony, there was throughout American culture at mid-century, however, a persistent anxiety surrounding the discourse of empire. In travel literature this sort of uneasiness was as prevalent as the proclamations of the Anglo-Saxon destiny. To many Americans the term empire was freighted with meanings contradictory to the assumptions they harbored about their national identity. In its overtones of military power and non-democratic rule, the word conveyed a spirit contrary to the idea of personal liberty.

Drawing a distinction between the two empires was the first step in buffering the millennial dreams of America from the fears of imperial decline. The idea of empire, even as it seemed to define the fulfillment of America's special place in the world, also belied the widespread sense of American historical exceptionalism and millennialist destiny. And, here again British Empire came to assume an equally significant role: its aggressive and violent form of empire served as a contrast against which American Empire could revitalize the exceptionalist myth, and preserve the nation's claim to a special place in history.

Even as Anglophiles were busy touting the United States' connection with Great Britain, the exceptionalist discourse that proclaimed American distinctiveness persisted. Lectures of travel that lambasted the Old World were common. In Brooklyn in the late-1850s, for instance, Joel Edison Rockwell drew the same tired distinctions between American innocence and European corruption that were familiar in his father's day.<sup>111</sup> Like travel writing, these lectures played a well-recognized role in this process of negative comparison that needs no recitation here. By the 1830s, however, the genres of both domestic and foreign travel writing were casting light upon the growing similarity of American and Old World society in ways that threatened existing beliefs in distinctiveness. Increasingly these writers and lecturers were describing scenes of social discord, luxury, and moral decay that now seemed uncomfortably familiar to Americans who had never been abroad.<sup>112</sup>

Another common theme was the issue of slavery. Nothing made Americans more anxious about their nation's future than the growing troubles over the "peculiar institution." By the early half of the century slavery had begun to muddy the notion of

liberty upon which many defined the nation's distinctiveness. England was thrust into the middle of this domestic dispute by the popular reaction to the insulting observations of English visitors and the reports of American travelers who commonly described being needled over the topic when abroad. An American who appeared "rather boastful of his country's freedom and prosperity," explained Henry Tappan while on tour through England, was sure to have slavery "leveled at him to dash his pride."<sup>113</sup> The subject, said Caroline Kirkland, was sure to be "thrown in the teeth of Americans who venture to have opinions on any subject in England."<sup>114</sup> As early as the 1830s, the traditional arguments that proclaimed American superiority to England had been turned on their head. "Sir, you have some strange anomalies in America," Henry McLellan was told,

[t]here is not a country where there exists great personal freedom, door by door with the most insulting tyranny. Pray how can you call yourself a free and equal people, and boast as you certainly do of it, whilst two million slaves are retained in captivity in your midst?<sup>115</sup>

Though the attacks continually forced Antebellum Americans to face this paradox and intensified the internal debate over slavery, they also united Americans in criticism of Great Britain. Americans of every stripe took umbrage at the "taunting, bitter spirit" of the criticism. "[H]owever strongly he may be disposed to oppose slavery," wrote one traveler, he "can but resent" the slurs thrust at his home country.<sup>116</sup> In response, pro- and anti-slavery Americans alike pummeled England and the rest of Europe for the working class "white slaves" of its industrial economies.<sup>117</sup> Pro-slavery men proclaimed America's slaves better treated than England's industrial and agricultural working classes.<sup>118</sup> Northerners less enamored by this analogy emphasized instead the hypocrisy of the English crusade when their own workers lived in misery. As a whole, Americans agreed that rather than condemn the United States, England would be better served

contemplating what one Tennessean called “the deplorable condition of their own population.”<sup>119</sup>

The growing sense of Europe’s corrupt influence on America, the sense of need for land to counter-act the deleterious developments in the East, and the irritation over the question of slavery, all contributed to an increased friction with Britain even while the appeal of Anglo-Saxon brotherhood encouraged a rapprochement between the two nations. The need for Americans to establish a distinctive sense of empire intensified public animus towards Britain far beyond what was justified by the foreign policy realities of the two countries. In effect, Americans established British Empire as a straw man against which their nation’s distinctive approach to expansion could be defined.

Travel writers stirred Anglophobia by describing the injustices of British Empire. These writers often dwelled upon how British Empire starkly differed from the democratic and freedom-preserving practices common to American expansion. Greed was first among Britain’s imperial sins. By mid-century few Americans doubted, as Taylor admitted to his audiences in the midst of his defense of imperialism, that there were “evils” and “selfish and uncaring aggrandizement” taking place in the lands ruled by England.<sup>120</sup>

Violence at the behest of greed was seen as the second sin of British Empire. Talk of the brutality that accompanied British expansion frequently served as a prelude to arguments for the exceptionalism of American Empire. Whigs and Young American Democrats alike bemoaned that so much of the admitted “progress” achieved by the British Empire had come at the end of a bayonet. Americans like Taylor lamented that the spread of red ink marking Great Britain’s rule could just as easily symbolize, as one

traveler said, “the blood” spilt achieving it.<sup>121</sup> None of these abuses apparently applied to the advance of the United States into the American West.

England’s depredations in Ireland became one exhibit of the tyranny of its imperial ambitions. Travelers in Ireland saw reason to distrust England’s claims of imperial benevolence. Agriculturalist Henry Colman attested “when one travels in Ireland and witnesses the condition of millions of those naked, degraded, miserable beings,” one concludes the Irish “have been very harshly used, and their grievances are real and deeply aggravated.”<sup>122</sup> In letters to his brother, later published to popular acclaim, the clergyman John Mitchell described the outrageous events of the Highland Clearances.<sup>123</sup> The young minister and popular travel writer of the later nineteenth-century Henry Martyn Field brought attention to the ruinous English taxation that prompted the Welsh Rebecca Riots.<sup>124</sup> With it he delivered a stinging condemnation of English rule. The “wealth which is drained from the Irish peasantry is carried off to be squandered in London [...] and thus the people are constantly impoverished,” he wrote.<sup>125</sup> As another American traveler Warren Isham summarized, Irishmen were “slaves de facto in a feudal” system.<sup>126</sup>

Even some ardent supporters of Anglo-Saxon unity turned against England because of violence perpetrated in the name of colonial rule. George Francis Train’s concerns with English actions in Ireland burst into flaming Anglophobia by late 1850s. The eccentric entrepreneur renewed his fame as a supporter of Irish Revolution, vigilant opponent of British Empire, and exponent of American imperialism. Train and other travel writers saw the flood of Irish immigrants to America as proof of the failures of British Empire and the superiority of America.<sup>127</sup>

At the same time there was the matter of Britain's domination in Asia. Nothing convinced Americans of British perfidy more than the opium trade. Our young law student Isaac Mickle described the public mood in December 1840 as "burning with indignation" after the first Opium War.<sup>128</sup> Even anglophiles like Sidney George Fisher had become disgruntled by 1858 with Britain "destroying" Chinese cities and "murdering" its people "for the sake of commerce."<sup>129</sup> While injustice was cited by many as the cause for disapproval, frequently it was British hypocrisy that grated upon the American conscience. The theme came to the fore in critiques of British policy in India. William Ware wrote that while Englishmen were "filled with a very virtuous indignation at the continued existence of American slavery [...] they swallow without difficulty the slavery of one hundred and fifty millions of Hindoos."<sup>130</sup> Caroline Kirkland noted mockingly, that the abolition of the slave trade "is considered a counterbalance for all the grinding and desolating oppression allowed in India, where slavery is still encouraged."<sup>131</sup> In the eyes of the English, Train observed sardonically, "American slavery is horrible, but the Indian ryot system is a blessing to the native. Annexation in America is robbery; in India, friendship and protection."<sup>132</sup>

In other words, travel writers who described the more far-flung reaches of the world frequently dwelt upon the shortcomings of British Empire even as they celebrated imperialism as a tool of progress. Their disgust with British Empire was not the same as a rejection of imperialism. Rather, on a practical level it served more as ammunition in the emerging commercial and geo-strategic rivalry between the nations. The United States had long been expected to replace Britain as the great power of the world. By 1843 one New York newspaper editor declared: "Europe and America are in a transition

state,” and unlike “grey and gouty” England, the United States was “just beginning to cultivate a pair of whiskers” (Bennett).<sup>133</sup> Ten years later it was evident to many that the warm acclaims of Anglo-Saxon brotherhood disguised recognition of the growing international rivalry between Britain and the United States. In his early Anglophilic letters to the Herald, Train nervously acknowledged that in the United States, England had “given birth to a powerful rival.”<sup>134</sup> By the end of the decade in his book Spread-Eagleism Train had joined the more militant Anglophobes who feared war was the only way Young America would wrest power from the arthritic grasp of Old England.<sup>135</sup>

Both the sense of partnership and rivalry pervaded American attitudes towards the Britain were seen in responses to the 1851 London’s World’s Fair. In its emphasis upon technology and empire the Fair was a showcase for the theory of Anglo-Saxon racial supremacy. In Taylor’s voyage around the world the interconnection of race, material culture, and empire that would become a leitmotif of his letters home was established from the outset with his visit to the World Fair in London.<sup>136</sup> Conceived as a celebration of England’s industrial, military, and colonial advances, the Great Exhibition was held in a specially constructed “Crystal Palace” of iron and glass. The exhibits depicted a history of man from ancient Egypt through the Renaissance and glorified the industrial revolution and the leadership of the Anglo-Saxon race.<sup>137</sup> Thousands of Americans journeyed to see what Greeley called “the first grand, cosmopolitan Olympiad of industry.”<sup>138</sup> As the American George Wilkes observed: “London is full of Americans at present.” Many millions more relied upon reports.<sup>139</sup>

Taylor fawned over the scientific and technological wonders, construing them, and the lush exhibits of Britain’s territorial and colonial possessions, as proof of the

benefit and destiny of the white man's rule over the world. Taylor's impressions were hardly unique. While considering the Fair's most popular collection of exhibits, the "Machinery Court," Greeley who had visited the Fair in the previous months and sent letters to the Tribune, suggested we take:

heart from the reflection that we live in the age of the Locomotive and the Telegraph, cheerfully press onward. As we rejoice over these trophies of Labor's might and beneficence shall we not also perceive foreshadowed there that fairer, grander, gladder future whereof this show is a prelude and a prediction?<sup>140</sup>

After visiting The Crystal Palace one traveler from Ohio concluded: "1851 may truly be called Annus Mirabilis—at least so far as travelers are concerned." As a "novel phase of our civilization," he went on, the Exhibition "entitled the year to that honor."<sup>141</sup> It is certain that for the multitude of Americans who accompanied Taylor on his subsequent journey, the Fair's celebration of modernity was a fitting opening chapter for their voyage.

On one hand this triumph of progress had a profoundly reassuring affect. Skeptics of the future like Arthur Cleveland Coxe gained comfort from the proceedings.<sup>142</sup> The Fair seemed to reveal the ways in which the two nations shared future of world domination.<sup>143</sup> One of these was reassuring sense of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority. Most English and American visitors absorbed the ideological implications without comment. It took the eye of one less flattered by the depiction of other peoples around the world, like David Dorr, a onetime slave, to see the underlying racial and nationalistic competitiveness of the Fair. "This is," Dorr wrote, "the place where every country is trying to make a pigmy of some other."<sup>144</sup>

While white Americans exalted over the exhibition of Anglo-Saxon prowess, there was also fierce competition between the United States and England. Americans

cheered over the victories of the McCormick Reaper and the yacht “America.” The strong showing of American technology at the World’s Fair encouraged some to believe, the United States was on the verge of surpassing its partner. “The English,” crowed one American, “sneered at Uncle Sam” but “he happened to have the strongest legs, and in due time, threw even John Bull fairly upon the Crystal Palace floor.”<sup>145</sup>

To many, the United States’ showing in London had profound global and world-historical significance. A good example comes from the late 1850s when New York landowner and merchant John Busteed Ireland toured Asia. What he saw there confirmed to him that Brother Jonathan was moving past John Bull as the leader of the world.

I don’t feel surprised at English pride and vanity over the continentals, to whom they are and ever have been superior [. . .]; but I do censure their pretended ignorance and stupidity about all else but their own affairs, as if they alone engrossed the sole attention of the world. [. . .] But when it comes to America, they must change their tone. We have shown ourselves superior to them in our contests.<sup>146</sup>

Ireland’s careless language might have blurred the distinction between vanity and pride McMichael had thought so clear in 1841, but his conclusion seemed the fulfillment of McMichael’s prediction that the United States would eventually surpass England.

That belief drew strength from the American sense of superiority over the rest of Europe. The defeat of liberty abroad after the European revolutions of 1848 highlighted to many the importance of America’s role in the future. Henry Clay, for example, told Kossuth on his later visit to the United States that the events of 1848 had taught “us to despair of any present success for liberal institutions in Europe.” “Far better it is for ourselves” and others, he went on, that “we should keep our lamp burning brightly on this western shore as a light to all nations, than to hazard its utter extinction amid the ruins of fallen or falling republics in Europe.” As for Great Britain, the World’s Fair showed that

while England's Anglo-Saxon blood had saved it from the chaos of revolution and made it the most powerful nation on earth, the showing of the United States at the Fair also illustrated that the progressive spirit of the race was moving westward yet again.<sup>147</sup> In America, Britain faced a stout new rival. As Taylor predicted as a young man the only people who had ever stood-up to the English were the Americans. Everywhere the English sets foot "he holds his ground," Taylor told audiences, "unless another of his own race should be there to dispute it."<sup>148</sup>

It was in the light of this emerging sense of competition that many of the critical passages regarding British rule that appear in Taylor's letter begin to make sense. They come to the fore most clearly in the letter Taylor wrote after arriving in India. Taylor was clearly astonished, as one reader put it, by the "habitual indignity" with which the British treated the native peoples. That the locals would someday rebel seemed evident to Taylor and had its roots in the "oppression and aristocratic pride" of the British who "stole three-quarters of the earnings of the people." Theirs was a way of empire that made the "horrid carnage" all but inevitable.<sup>149</sup>

### **Commerce, Whiteness and the Uniqueness of American Empire**

In the eyes of many the World's Fair in London confirmed the Anglo-Saxons were leading progress race on earth. And yet the competition at the Fair between England and the United States suggested too how this purported narrative of racial unity was frayed. Here and elsewhere Americans, fearful about the historical implications of empire, were seeking to differentiate their own nation's expansionism from British imperialism. By emphasizing American as opposed to Anglo-Saxon achievement at the Fair, and indulging in a heated nationalistic competition with Britain, Americans were

drawing a distinct line between themselves and “Mother England.” As with the widespread attack on British Empire discussed above, this language was necessary to effectively argue America’s imperial and historical uniqueness. The much ballyhooed victories symbolized for many the nation’s coming usurpation of England’s crown as the leader in human progress.

Taylor’s letters from the final phase of his travels and the lectures he gave when he returned emphasized the importance of commerce to the future of progress. Exploration was not divorced from the evolution of either material or commercial aims of empire. “Where the traveler has once penetrated, he smoothes [sic] the way for those who follow,” Taylor explained.<sup>150</sup> Members of the New York Geographical Society—many of them scholars, government officials, diplomats, educators, industrialists, merchants, publishers, editors, ministers, and philanthropists—were interested broadly in commercial ventures. They believed that the accumulation of practical information about the earth and the demographics of human life would aid in the spread of Christian religion, commercial opportunities, lend general moral improvements through the world. By leading the advance of civil society, and thus commerce, into the west, it seemed the United States had facilitated the greatest advance of civilization in world history. As Taylor’s early biographer Russell Conwell observed, the letters Taylor wrote while in Asia focus a great deal on information useful to trade. “Taylor felt now that a patriotic duty rested upon him [...] to devote himself to the practical things which might be of advantage to his ambitious countrymen.” His description of the coffee trade around the Red Sea was so informative that at least one Baltimore merchant “acted profitably” upon

it by setting up business in the region. Taylor provided detailed accounts of products and trade practices in Bombay, Calcutta, and details about the Chinese tea market.<sup>151</sup>

The focus upon commerce, and what he saw as the liberal democratic values that accompanied it, functioned as a means of distinguishing American Empire from that of Great Britain. Based on universalist principles of market economics and personal liberty rather than violence, American dominion possessed a unique durability that would preserve it from the decline experienced by empires of the past. Given the importance of race to the justification of empire, it was inevitable that the claims of American distinctiveness possessed a counterweight to the theory of Anglo-Saxon racial unity. Taylor argued that one explanation for the universalism of American values was the nation's emerging racial uniqueness. Americans were no longer a purely Anglo-Saxon but a powerful blend of white peoples.

In the popular imagination America's peculiar position as the great civilizer through commerce was evidenced in the popularity of the Western moving panorama, and within them the peculiar fascination with the imagery of trade. Within a few short months of the 1851 World Fair ended, for instance, an enterprising showman named Averill began to tour the United States with a moving picture entitled "Panorama of the World's Fair and the Overland Route to California." The pairing of the two within a single canvas highlights not only the connection between commerce, progress and empire, but also a sense that America, in the midst of its transformation of the West, was at the center of the spread of all three.

Many Americans believed that the growth of California's Asian trade was the key to progress, spelled doom for the continued domination of Britain over the East, and

made the United States central to the future. As we have seen, by mid-nineteenth century some were arguing that the British Empire was reaching the end of its hold over the world. George Francis Train asserted that despite the positive influence British rule had upon its colonies in India and China, she had also retarded those countries' growth. As proof, he maintained that the ballyhooed "Young Bengal" had all too frequently come to "imitate only the bad traits of the English."<sup>152</sup> Some, such as the explorer John Lloyd Stephens and businessman John Ireland, believed that America's commercial empire represented a morally superior evolution over British global hegemony.

Belief in the distinctiveness of America's commercial practices became central to the later discourse of empire. In the vast majority of travel accounts, American trans-oceanic expansion of commerce was described as bloodless conquest. The United States was not interested in territory but in the spread of economic freedom, the story went. Here we see that if the brutality of American continental expansion was hidden by the myth of an empty landscape, the aggression of its steps towards trans-oceanic empire were masked by the apparent benignity of commerce.

One way this illusion of benign empire gained traction was an emphasis upon the difference between England's military domination of India and China and the American approach in Japan. Until well into the twentieth-century, Americans proudly, if mistakenly, pointed to Japan and its rapid rise as a product of their benevolent foreign policy. Despite the fact that Perry viewed his diplomatic mission to Japan as part of the preparations for what he believed to be the inevitable conflict over Asian supremacy between British and the United States, Perry's actions in Japan became a model, or so it seemed to Americans, of how their empire would be different. The commercial

objectives in which Perry cloaked the mission accorded with the less martial and more benevolent image of America's expansionist destiny.

Taylor certainly framed the expedition in these terms. He described the aim of opening Japan as a service to the people of that country. But it also advanced progress and America's coming commercial empire. As one contemporary reader of Taylor writing about Japan reported:

[Taylor's] services in giving an accurate idea of the countries [the Perry expedition] explored were invaluable, because it was not only necessary [for progress] to visit those countries and open their ports to commerce, but it was also necessary to give to the American people such a idea of the advantages and conveniences of trade as to induce them to enter upon it. Nothing could be clearer than his views of life in these islands, nothing more complete than his enumeration of the products, manufactures, and needs of the countries they visited.<sup>153</sup>

Proof of the universal appeal of the American approach was the way the Japanese were perceived to have enthusiastically embraced the arrival of Perry where others had failed. "Almost every commercial nation had, from time to time, attempted to secure a footing for trading-post or a harbor for their vessels." But Perry succeeded, and "now a mighty nation and a fertile country were restored to the family of nations."<sup>154</sup> Here, travel writers said, were a people—affectionately dubbed the "Yankees of the East" and its' Emperor "Young Japan"—who longed for contact with the West and who thirsted for the "freedom" that their government denied them. This "tyranny" justified America's benevolent intervention since commerce would force an end to despotism. Japan's subsequent westernization made her a perfect symbol of American trans-oceanic empire. "From this time, the history of Japan will be associated," Taylor confidently wrote, "with that of the United States, England, and Russia, in the development of civilization."<sup>155</sup>

Taylor cannily contrasted the Japanese progressivism and their link to American Empire with the purported “backwardness” of Asians dominated by the British. He thereby established, in surrogate, the difference between United States and British Empire.<sup>156</sup> The Japanese as opposed to the Chinese appeared eager for change. This impulse seemed in accordance with the progress that American Empire would produce: the universal fulfillment of individual potential.

No oriental race shows such capacity for progress as the Japanese. One of their characteristics is a restless curiosity, which assists them in rapidly acquiring a knowledge of science and the mechanic arts; an the eagerness which the government now exhibits to avail itself of all modern discoveries is all the more remarkable, since the opportunity was so long and so stubbornly resisted.”<sup>157</sup>

Taylor and others suggested that whatever progressive tendencies the Chinese may have possessed were suppressed by British imperial exploitation. As Japan westernized in the years to come the fact that the United States and not Britain was that nation’s “benefactor” fostered a belief among Americans in the benevolence of their own empire.<sup>158</sup> Taylor, as a member of Perry’s crew, was one of the first Americans to popularize a self-reflective image of Japan. His writing had a profound impact on later interpreters of Japan like Frances Hall and William Eliot Griffis.<sup>159</sup>

For Taylor it was all a sign of America’s coming eclipse of British Empire. In the providential vision of the future favored in the United States, the virtue believed to lie behind American expansion meant that, as Morton McMichael convinced Isaac Michael, “at last the country from which we claim our origin, will become a province under the most mighty and splendid republics, our own already invincible Columbia.”<sup>160</sup> Many argued the United States was the future of empire for the simple reason that her emphasis on commerce rather than war made her fewer enemies. This sense of virtue allowed

Americans to imagine their nation's imperial destiny not in partnership with British Empire, nor as contradiction of what they imagined to be their nation's special role as the bastion of liberty, but rather as a distinctive, more perfect, expression of civilized empire.

Taylor believed that America's special instinct for commerce, and the universal democratic virtues that accompanied it, were linked to race and geography. Taylor shared a growing belief with others that American civilization was the final evolution not of the Anglo-Saxon but of a more inclusive "White" civilization. For many of his countrymen, some of whom were not immigrants from England, the narrow racial terms of Anglo-Saxonism were unpalatable.

Taylor's views were part the broader development of a white racial national identity during the antebellum period. In the beginning decades of the nineteenth century a vision of America as a republic dedicated to the freedom of white men at the expense of others—what some have termed a *herrenvolk* democracy—came to dominate both southern and northern political discourse.<sup>161</sup> Since the earliest days of European colonial occupation in the south the needs for social unity against indigenous resistance as well as the dangers of the slavery fueled the evolution of collective white racial consciousness that eclipsed class differences.<sup>162</sup> In the north the need to ease the tension unleashed by the rise of manufacturing and immigration produced a similar celebration of whiteness.<sup>163</sup>

As white Americans began to seek a collective sense of national identity that set them apart from Europe, the discourse of whiteness became aligned with the political ideologies of liberty and personal freedom associated with the emerging nation. When Taylor read Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's 1782 book Letters from an American Farmer as a boy he encountered a belief that Americans constituted a whole new branch

of mankind. James Kirk Paulding, a popular nationalist whom Taylor enjoyed reading in his youth, wove together the differing lines of these arguments when he attacked the exclusivity of Anglo-Saxon racial theory and the sins of British Empire while advocating the racial unity of older European-Americans with the newly arriving Irish German immigrants.<sup>164</sup> By the late-1840s popular middle-class journals such as The Ladies Repository endorsed the view that a “new race” and “very superior one” would be the result of the happy union of so many to America.<sup>165</sup> It was the sort of argument that must have reassured many for it diminished fear over the influence of immigrants. At the same time the implication of the argument had a direct bearing upon international as well as domestic conditions: by counteracting the fear of decline the theory that America possessed a new racial vitality guaranteed the millennialist destiny of the nation. It confirmed that the America’s racial dominance would last.<sup>166</sup>

Taylor further developed the link between commerce, empire, and America’s white racial distinctiveness in the years after his return to the United States in 1853. As before, the shortcomings of the British Empire were used to argue of vitality of American Empire. In the later 1850s Taylor pointed out that if the mingled nature of American race, unlike the rigidity of the Anglo-Saxon character, made it more pliant and flexible thus able to meet the challenges of the future, Britain’s difference from this broader vision of white racial strength was characterized by its imperial policies. Following the event of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58, Taylor argued the cause they in the colonial policies derived from the anti-democratic class-driven nature of English society. Racial insensitivity was frequently mentioned as a cause of England’s colonial misrule. Taylor complained that one of the most offensive problems that led to the Mutiny was the refusal

of the English to recognize the racial affinities between themselves and Brahmin elite. Local “pure blood Caucasian” Indian elites were called “niggers” the same as the lower caste natives. “Why is it that the virtue of Exeter Hall and Stafford House can tolerate this fact without a blush, yet condemn, with pharisaic zeal, the social inequality of the negro and white races in America?”<sup>167</sup> In any case, it was all of sign of the weakness of British Empire and indirectly how the inclusive racial focus of whiteness portended the resilience of American Empire.

Others made the same point. In the eyes of some Americans, the concern of the English people for black slavery, seemed a betrayal of liberty sense it came at the expense, or so it seemed, of white male privilege. Many saw British colonial policy concerned more with preservation of class privilege than race and personal liberty. And it was not just southerners who made this argument. Caroline Kirkland, for example, argued that the only reason a de facto form of slavery was still permitted in India was the fear of class warfare in England. Permitting the oppression of the Indian, she asserted, “fills the pockets of impoverished nobles and needy soldiers, who might else prove troublesome at home.”<sup>168</sup> It was a position, in other words, that might have been more creditable to Americans if instead it had been justified by reference to white racial unity rather than the concerns of class—an ironic argument given that whiteness was at least in part the result of efforts to diminish class friction.

Taylor’s most concentrated discussion on the matter came in 1860 when he pulled together his thoughts on the issues of race and empire into lecture titled “Man and Climate.” He concluded that America’s special destiny was a result of its unique racial qualities and moral virtues that were destined to preserve it from decline. Undoubtedly

the divisive forces that were about to tear the nation apart concentrated Taylor's thoughts upon precisely what unified the country. What he ended in saying was America's special racial quality was a product of both sections of the country.

The assumptions at the heart of the argument were not much different than those he expressed during his travels around the world. He tried to weave the tangled threads of racial thought he had acquired over the years, along with his own personal experiences as a traveler, into a systematic argument. The essence of it was same: the superiority of the Caucasian, destiny of that race to rule others, and the special role of the United States in the historical processes. He, however, refined two key points of his earlier writings. First, he presented combination of environmental and biological arguments that permitted him to assert the inherent superiority of the Caucasian yet retain the role of free will in individual self-improvement. Second, the essence of that compromise allowed him to offer an explanation for the uniqueness of Americans that focused on their racial hybridity, moral strength, and universalist characteristics. All together, these qualities destined them to not only become the dominant people and empire of the future but hold that position indefinitely. The result was idiosyncratic but like much of Taylor's thinking consistent with the vague syncretic racial beliefs that were widespread among his contemporaries.

"Man and Climate" begins with assertion about why Taylor's opinions on the nature of man were correct and others were not: in order to know man one must travel and live among various peoples. That had taught him that everywhere man was the same but also inextricably different at the same time. "The superficial observer," Taylor said:

looks over the Earth and finds certain tastes, appetites and ideas, certain social and political phenomena repeated, under the same conditions and in similar stages

of civilization. [...] It would be easy, by picking out these resemblances, to argue that there is no intrinsic difference between the various families of men. But the resemblance is in the genus; the difference is that of species. The subtle distinctions which spring from climate and race are often overlooked. The same white sunlight shines over the whole earth, but one flower reflects a crimson ray, and one a blue.<sup>169</sup>

Here Taylor asserts his own expertise but signals that that what will follow will conflate both the language of racial topology and the universalist sentiments of the Enlightenment.

The expression of “white sunlight” for Taylor was an allusion to whiteness as the racial norm. In what follows we discover Taylor jettisoned the theory of Anglo-Saxonism. He speaks instead exclusively in the language of Caucasianism and even more generally of whiteness. But he has absorbed unto them the critical qualities of superiority so strongly associated with the Anglo-Saxon. Within the framework the central story of history has not changed. The Caucasian has moved from its original home ever westward. He avoids the question of origins. Some races seem to have never migrated, others to be branches of the Caucasian. “In whatever way the physical diversity of the races may have been caused,” Taylor said the reality is they are different. If we are to understand human history, he told audiences, we must “take them as they are, and as they have been since the commencement of the historic record.”<sup>170</sup>

He identifies eleven races that cluster themselves into four climatic zones. Following the eighteenth-century naturalists he assigns the environment a role in shaping peoples, but like hedges this position by asserting the immutable biological distinction between races.

My own observations, extending through all the climates of the earth, have led me to the following conclusions:--First, that the physical peculiarities of the various races may be somewhat modified by external influences, but can never be totally changed; secondly, that their qualities of mind are capable of a great variety of development, through change of climate or the contact with other races yet still

preserve the same original character; and lastly, that the moral nature being most susceptible, is most easily influenced.<sup>171</sup>

In effect Taylor retains both a progressive and fixed idea of race thereby satisfying the simultaneous belief in the possibility of personal improvement and the belief in biological predestination.

Taylor believed a moral geography governed over this balance of free will and determinism. He also believed that geography revealed God's intention for the Caucasian to be the dominate race. The geographic and climatic conditions of a zone are critical to the cultural and moral development of a race. Rehashing arguments made by others Taylor asserted that the African was morally crippled and non-progressive because in the tropical zone in which they lived life was so easy as to make discipline unnecessary. Necessity pressed so hard upon the races of the northern zone they are left little room for development. The Caucasian has always lived in the perfect latitudinal zone between 70 degrees south and 40 degrees north where conditions foster moral qualities analogous to the Protestant Ethos necessary to produce progress.<sup>172</sup>

As proof he offers a number of examples. For one it is evident he drew upon the studies of Mexico by Baltimore law professor and sometime diplomat Brantz Mayer. Mayer was typical of the new elite emerging during the first half of the century. He had traveled to Europe and Near East for education and become an acquaintance of Emerson in Italy.<sup>173</sup> Taylor had read Mayer's first book Mexico As It Was and As It Is shortly after it was published in 1844. The book was written following several years that Mayer served as the Secretary of the Legation in Mexico. In keeping with the tendency among his contemporaries that I have repeatedly pointed out, Mayer was fascinated in what the failures of Mexico taught us about the nature of the social and political success of the

United States. The colonial conquerors of Mexico had been hopelessly corrupted through racial mongrelization. Mayer like so many of his contemporaries saw race at the core of historical development. As Mayer wrote in a later work, despite the fact that “the world has advanced in commerce, manufactures, science, literature and arts,” Mexico has remains comparatively “fixed in a midst of a stagnant semi-civilization” due to race.<sup>174</sup> It lacked a sufficiently large “white” population to maintain order and progress. As Taylor pointed to as proof of this instability in his lecture, “Mexico has had 31 revolutions in 38 years,” a republican government requires the temperate nature of white men.<sup>175</sup> With his argument on climatic zones, Taylor offered an explanation for these racial conditions.

It was from the German explorer, naturalist, and geographer Alexander von Humboldt that Taylor acquired this idea of the “golden mean.” Humboldt’s fascinating account of his own travels and book of popular scientific synthesis The Cosmos made him one of the best-known thinkers of the early nineteenth-century. In it Humboldt consciously combined his scientific observations of nature to craft an understanding of the underlying unity of the universe that appeared to link the physical and metaphysical into a single whole. He was the man to whom many Americans as diverse as the New England diarist Maria Mitchell and Southern belle Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas looked to understand the mechanics of the larger world. Taylor later met Humboldt and popularized him in the United States by contributing to a biography of him, as well as giving lectures and by writing several articles in popular magazines like Littell’s Living Age describing the German’s ideas.<sup>176</sup> Humboldt, however, did not concern himself greatly with issues of race and hierarchy. In the Virgin Land, Henry Nash Smith illustrated how the expansionist William Gilpin nonetheless elaborated on Thomas Hart

Benton's Anglo-Saxon inspired westward course of empire argument by using Humboldt. The United States, Gilpin argued, was the next location in the narrow climatic band in which civilization as it moved westward would inevitably arrive.<sup>177</sup> Popular scholars like Swiss geologist Arnold Guyot and American Egyptologist Joseph Parrish Thompson did the same. Thompson used the German to support a Biblically inspired argument which claimed ancient Egypt represented "the earliest development of civilization" and that America was civilization's final fulfillment.<sup>178</sup>

Idiosyncratic as it was, Taylor's argument followed along similar lines. According to him it was beyond doubt that God had intended United States to be the set of the greatest empire the world. It was ordained by the climatic conditions that composed the new nation, and there were no accidents in nature. In the Americas the climatic conditions were so variable and the people who populated it so diverse and yet all of one racial type that its inhabitants came the closest as possible to the creation of a "cosmopolitan" race. While it was true that the ill effect of climate made it impossible for a Caucasian, or for that matter any race, to directly rule over much of the world—a fact that was destined to be the ruin of the British Empire—Americans possessed qualities that made their spirit universal and thus direct conquest unnecessary. Not only did they possess the progressive and moral qualities common to the Caucasian and temperate climatic zone, but the mix of northern prudence and southern boldness made them a perfect blend of traits for commercial enterprise. The United States was destined to build an empire, as others had long argued, based on trade not military conquest. Conducting empire at a distance would permit the United States to retain the superior

moral, active, and intellectual traits of the white race that were necessary to sustain a healthy republic.

### **Conclusion**

Taylor's racial theories fit nicely with the expectation of white racial nationalism emerging among some of his fellow citizens in the mid-nineteenth century. In his Centennial Ode he delivered at the Philadelphia World Fair in 1876 he gave voice to the belief that the United States' peculiar identity, the promise of tomorrow, would be achieved through a careful amalgamation of not only culture but also race.

[The United States] gathers the chosen of her seed,  
From the haunted of every crown and creed.

Fused in her candid light,  
To one strong race all races here unite.<sup>179</sup>

American perceptions of their ventures in Japan and elsewhere revealed they saw themselves engaging in a form of empire based on potentiality, one fundamentally different from that pursued by England. The United States' dedication to commerce, liberty, and white racial unity stood in contrast to the militarism and hierarchical class system that was thought to pervade British Empire and society. The only restriction white Americans saw on the universality of liberty was a people's racially determined capacity to defend and exercise their freedom. To the majority of Americans the freedom of the black man in England did not suggest it was more egalitarian than the United States. It represented the extension of liberty to those who could not fully exercise it. Thus this extension of freedom to blacks by England was not seen as a sign of national superiority. Indeed to some it was proof that England was more a rigid, hierarchical society than a white society. England, it was thought in some circles, should be more

concerned with the liberty of all its white citizens rather than the freedom of those who do not deserve it. Simultaneously the use of racial arguments permitted many to excuse the darker side of imperial conquest as a necessary measure to achieve the liberation of people who could not manage freedom for themselves.

Taylor and others used the contrast with Britain to argue that American Empire was different than any that had come before. It was rooted in universal celebration of personal liberty and desire for progress. As such it promised to preserve through the challenges that arose with expansion: the decaying influence of the growth of overweening power and decadence. It also diffused the external weakness associated with empire: the need for domination and conquest over others. American Empire, according to this view, was not conquest but the realization of natural liberties. Indeed it was in fact not empire at all. Within this formulation the idea of race provided a rationale for the realities of asymmetrical power. Anglo-Americans like Taylor could draw sustenance for belief in their special role in history and right to rule from their racial link to the glories of British Empire. But they also could evoke the claims of universalism, and even racial difference, to insulate themselves from the ugly nature of empire and its inevitable decline.

---

<sup>1</sup> At Home and Abroad, Series 2, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Secretary of the Treasury Robert J. Walker, quoted in William L. Neumann, American Encounter with Japan: From Perry to MacArthur (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1963), 23

<sup>3</sup> For examples of Taylor's newspaper coverage of events in Europe see both the daily and weekly Tribune editions during these years. The limited use of by-lines at the Tribune makes it difficult to know what articles Taylor wrote. In some instances style and content suggest his authorship. In other instances, references to his authorship of a piece, like the New York Tribune story on the life of Pope Pius IX, appear in his letters.

<sup>4</sup> Taylor, "India," Lecture Box, 11, Bayard Taylor Collection [hereafter cited as BTC], Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA. [here after cited as CCHS].

<sup>5</sup> Isaac Mickle, A Gentleman of Much Promise: the Diary of Isaac Mickle, 1837-1845. Ed. Philip English Mackey (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1977), 119.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> See for example, M. Maltz-Brun, System of Universal Geography (Boston: Samuel Walker, 1834), and, William Guthrie, General Atlas For Guthrie's Geography (Philadelphia, 1815).

<sup>8</sup> Taylor, "Man and Climate," 36, Lecture Box, BTC, CCHS.

<sup>9</sup> See David Hume, "Of National Characters," in E. F. Miller, ed., Essays: Moral, Philosophical and Literary (Indianapolis, 1985). The West Chester library contained a complete set of Hume's collected works.

<sup>10</sup> In the early nineteenth-century these arguments gain ground. By the early 1820s the racial classificatory system of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach had become widely accepted. Blumenbach divided humanity into five racial groups of which he placed the Caucasian—a term he invented—above the others. He asserted these types resulted from a variety of inherent traits as well as environmental factors. Like others Blumenbach hedged his arguments, leaving a great deal of uncertainty about what he actually believed caused the diversity. Despite his growing emphasis upon inherent characteristics reflects what was a hardening attitude regarding the immutability of racial difference. For a discussion of this see Thomas E. Gossett, Race: The History of an Idea in America (New York: Schocken Books, 1963). Also see I. Hannaford, Race: The History of an Idea in the West (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> See Taylor's reading see Charter, Constitution, By-Laws, and Catalogue of Books of the Chester Library Company (Chester: Y. S. Walter, 1845). Also see Charter, Constitution and Catalogue of the Kennett Square Library (Kennett, 1841).

<sup>12</sup> Taylor, "Animal Man," 12, 13-14, Lecture Box, BTC, CCHS.

<sup>13</sup> In the beginning decades of the nineteenth-century, German romantics connected this belief in an Indo-European language and Central Asian origin with the racially charged notions of Teutonic cultural distinctiveness. During the early years of Taylor's life this confused fusion of language, race, and nation mixed combustively with the English and American Anglo-Saxon myth of a superior, westward expanding, and liberty-loving people. By extending the history of the "gifted" Anglo-Saxon back through time to the origins of civilization itself, the last connection formed the nucleus of grand historical narrative that purported to explain and justify white racial superiority. By the beginning of the century, belief in the racial romanticism that glorified the Anglo-Saxon as the best of the "Caucasian" peoples had become common in the United States.

<sup>14</sup> Bayard Taylor, "Man and Climate," 29.

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of the evolution of Anglo-Saxonism see Reginald Horsman, Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).

<sup>16</sup> Taylor for one enjoyed reading these words in situations that reminded him of world history. Writing to thank Prescott for having sent him a copy of his recent book, Taylor wrote: "I well know the pleasure in store for me, having read all of your previous works, and re-read them in the seclusion of a voyage across the Indian Ocean, during my passage home from Japan. There were no books in the Captain's library more frequently in the hands of passengers." Bayard Taylor to William Henry Prescott, 2 January 1856, Paul C. Wermuth, Selected Letters of Bayard Taylor (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1997), 128. On the importance of racial thinking in William Prescott see Thomas F. Gossett, Race: The History of an Idea in America (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), 91-92. Also see Horsman, Race and Manifest, 182.

<sup>17</sup> Taylor, "Man and Climate," 36.

<sup>18</sup> The gap in scientific knowledge and technological arts that had widened between Westerners and the rest of the world following the industrial revolution of the later half of the previous century steadily emerged as the key measure of difference between peoples. In the years after the Enlightenment belief in the superiority of those who mastered nature blended with the romantic notion of a racially "progressive peoples." In time progress was perceived as an exclusive attribute of the Caucasian. See Michael Adas, Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989). See also his recent study of American attitudes towards technology and empire in Dominance by Design: Technological Imperatives and America's Civilizing Mission (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> Traveling by horse and stage across Mexico he surveyed for his readers the country their nation had recently defeated. Mexicans, he noted, did not at all understand the responsibilities of good government: the countryside was filled with bandits that the army and civil servants did nothing to stop. Like most of the stagnant material culture of the people, the stages he rode were "ancient" and unreliable. Bayard Taylor, Eldorado, or Adventures in the Path of Empire (New York: Putnam, 1850), 259-260.

- <sup>20</sup> Bayard Taylor to George Boker, 23 March 1851, Marie Hansen-Taylor and Horace E. Scudder, Life and Letters of Bayard Taylor, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1884), 207.
- <sup>21</sup> Smyth, Bayard Taylor, 87; Taylor, A Journey to Central Africa; or, Life and Landscapes from Egypt to the Negro Kingdoms of the White Nile (New York: G. P. Putnam & Co., 1854).
- <sup>22</sup> Taylor, Journey to Central Africa, 220.
- <sup>23</sup> William E. Kendall, Letters from Europe and the East, during the years of 1859 and 1860 (New York: G. A. Whitehorne, 1860), 98.
- <sup>24</sup> Russell H. Conwell, Life, Travels, and Literary Career of Bayard Taylor (Boston: Russell and Co., 1879) 186.
- <sup>25</sup> Jane A. Eames, Another Budget; or, things which I saw in the East (Boston: Ticknor & Field, 1855), 92. In addition to writing Sunday school books, Eames was an inveterate traveler from Concord and the author of 4 books between 1847 and 1875.
- <sup>26</sup> Kendall, Letters from Europe and the East, 102.
- <sup>27</sup> Bayard Taylor, A Journey to Central Africa; or, Life and Landscapes from Egypt to the Negro Kingdoms of the White Nile (New York: G. P. Putnam & Co., 1854), 29.
- <sup>28</sup> Taylor, A Journey, preface.
- <sup>29</sup> Taylor, A Journey, 53, 158.
- <sup>30</sup> Diary entry from 14 September 1840 in Julia A. Dyson, Life and Thought (Boston: Whittemore, Niles, and Hall, 1856), 68-69.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid. For more on Catherwood see Victor Wolfgang Von Hagen, F. Catherwood, Architect-Explorer of Two Worlds (Barre, Mass.: Barre Publishers, 1968). Some examples of other panoramas advertised in New York during the later 40s include religious works like "The Creation of the World," and "Sacred Dioramas of the Creation of the World and the Deluge." Others were more clearly travel oriented: "Panorama of Paris," "Panorama of Madras," "Panorama of Jerusalem," "Grand Panorama of Broadway," "The Bombardment of Vera Cruz," "The Mediterranean, Palestine, Jerusalem, and the Island of Rhodes," and "Gliddon's Panorama of the Nile" to name but a few. See George C. D. Odell, Annals of the New York Stage (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), vol. 5, op cite.
- <sup>32</sup> Victor Wolfgang Von Hagen, Frederick Catherwood Archt (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 49-51.
- <sup>33</sup> New York Mirror, 18 August 1838.
- <sup>34</sup> Conwell, Life of Bayard Taylor, 184,190.
- <sup>35</sup> The term evoked both the hope that the nation had begun to reach its appointed role, but also the fear that this accumulated strength represented the corruption and decline of that very promise. Wai-chee Dimock, Empire for Liberty: Melville and the Poetics of Individualism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 13.
- <sup>36</sup> On the broader development of apocalyptic thinking between 1830 and 1850 see Curtis Dahl, "The American School of Catastrophe," American Quarterly, 11 (Autumn, 1959), 380-390.
- <sup>37</sup> In Taylor's youth the term empire had assumed a more dubious meaning than it bore in the time of the nation's founding. Jefferson's call for an "empire of liberty" made empire out to be a virtue. But that was because empire had for him, and much of his generation, more of a geographical connotation rather than one denoting a political institution or economic and military power. Consciousness concerning the vast engrossment of global territories by European nations had begun to change that understanding. For a discussion of the meaning of "empire" for Jefferson see Reginald Horsman, Race and Manifest, 86. Edward Gibbon, Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, 3 vols. (New York: Modern Library, 1932), 442-443. On the notion of decline see J. G. A. Pocock, Virtue, Commerce, and Liberty (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 125-141; and also Arthur Herman, The Idea of Decline in Western History (New York: The Free Press, 1997). On the influence of Hume and Robertson on Taylor see my earlier discussion in chapter 1-2.
- <sup>38</sup> Dahl, "The American School of Catastrophe."
- <sup>39</sup> For contemporary thoughts about the work on Thomas Cole see Louis Legrand Noble, The Course of Empire, Voyage of Life, and other pictures of Thomas Cole (New York: Cornish, Lamport, 1853). For contemporary analysis of his life and significance see Ellwood C. Parry III, The Art of Thomas Cole (1988), and William C. Tuettnner and Alan Wallach, eds, Thomas Cole: Landscape into History (1994).

<sup>40</sup> For Dyson's comment, see again her diary entry 14 September 1840 in Julia A. Dyson, Life and Thought (Boston: Whittemore, Niles, and Hall, 1856), 68-69.

<sup>41</sup> Valentine Mott, Travels in Europe and the East (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1842), viii.

<sup>42</sup> Joseph Parrish Thompson, Photographic Views of Egypt Past and Present (New York: Jewett, Proctor, and Worthington, 1854), 218, 230.

<sup>43</sup> Taylor, A Journey, 236; 237.

<sup>44</sup> Taylor, "India," 4.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 6, 5.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15. James Mill, The History of British India (Oxford: Cambridge University Press, 1959 [1817]). Although inclined to credit Indians with some measure of "progressive" racial character, his attitudes towards Indian civilization as a whole parallels those espoused by James Mills in his immensely influential History of British India. As the historian Michael Adas explained, Mill—"the self-made son of a shoemaker"—based his critique of India on the principles of Benthamite Utilitarianism and Scottish Common Sense philosophy. It is not clear when Taylor read Mill's book but it does appear in the 1877 estate sales on his books. However, based on a comparison of Mill's and Taylor's writing and Taylor's tendency to read the best works on a country before he visited it, I believe Taylor had read the work before his arrival in India. For a discussion of Mill see Adas, Machines as the Measure of Men, especially pages 169-173. See Minturn, From New York to Delhi. For sources on Taylor's readings see: Charter, Constitution, By-Laws, and Catalogue of Books of the Chester Library Company (Chester: Y. S. Walter, 1845). Also see a list of some of the books in Taylor's personal library, Rutgers University Special Collections the "Bayard Taylor's Library," Executor's Sale Catalogue (Bangs & Co., 1879).

<sup>50</sup> Taylor, A Visit, 285, 495.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 325, 321-322, 354.

<sup>52</sup> Taylor to George Boker (USS *Susquehanna*, Macao China), 11 August 1853, Hansen-Taylor and Scudder, Life and Letters, 1:257.

<sup>53</sup> For a discussion of the influence of George Barrow's Travels in China see Adas, Machines, 178-184. John Barrow, Travels in China (London, 1804). Also see Barrow's Auto-Biographical Memoir (London, 1847). Oddly it was fidelity to these values that made some Americans like Robert Miniturn more charitable to the Chinese during this period. Although a great fan of Taylor's, the New York merchant Minturn held the Chinese in higher esteem than Indians because of their work habits. Robert B. Minturn Jr., From New York to Boston, By Way of Rio de Janeiro, Australia and China (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1858), 444.

<sup>54</sup> Taylor, "Japan," 11.

<sup>55</sup> Taylor, A Visit, 354.

<sup>56</sup> Taylor, "Japan," 11, 12. For Taylor's harsh opinions of the Chinese see A Visit, 354.

<sup>57</sup> Taylor, "India," 5.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>59</sup> The frequently strident Anglo-phobia of some Americans during the first half of the century were principally driven by conflicts over the disputed boundary of the Oregon territory and Great Britain's sometimes unclear ambitions in South America.

<sup>60</sup> George Francis Train, An American Merchant in Europe, Asia and Australia (New York: G. P. Putnam & Co., 1857), vii, 343.

<sup>61</sup> James Kirke Paulding, The Diverting History of John Bull and Brother Jonathan (New York: Harpers and Brothers, 1835 [1812]).

<sup>62</sup> J[ohn] W[illiamson] Palmer, Up and Down the Irrawaddi (New York: Rudd & Carletti, 1859), 346, 180, 252.

<sup>63</sup> Taylor, A Visit, 30.

<sup>64</sup> Miniturn, From New York to Boston, 405-06.

<sup>65</sup> Taylor, A Visit, 265.

<sup>66</sup> Taylor, "India," 41.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

- <sup>68</sup> 8 April 1860, Calvin Fletcher, The Diary of Calvin Fletcher: Including Letters to and from Calved Fletcher, 9 vols., eds. Gayle Thornbrough and Paula Corpuz (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1983), 6:523. Also see his other entries between March and April of 1860. William Stephen Raities Hodson, Twelve Years of a Soldier's Life in India (London: J. W. Parker, 1859).
- <sup>69</sup> Quoted in Horsman, Race and Manifest, 227.
- <sup>70</sup> Sidney George Fisher, A Philadelphia Perspective; the diary of Sidney George Fisher, ed. Nicholas B. Wainwright (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1967), 105.
- <sup>71</sup> Taylor, "Japan & Loo Choo," 12.
- <sup>72</sup> Taylor, "India," 31.
- <sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 36, 32.
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 11, 15, 28, 29.
- <sup>75</sup> Quoted in Horsman, Race and Manifest, 237.
- <sup>76</sup> Quoted in William L. Neumann, American Encounter with Japan: From Perry to MacArthur (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1963) 23.
- <sup>77</sup> Quoted in Horsman, Race and Manifest, 287.
- <sup>78</sup> Taylor, Eldorado, 125.
- <sup>79</sup> Democratic Review, 20 (February 1847), 99-100. Quoted in Horsman, Race and Manifest, 244.
- <sup>80</sup> Taylor to Rebecca Way Taylor, 8 May 1853, Taylor-Hansen, Life and Letters, 1:250.
- <sup>81</sup> Frank H. Severance, ed. Millard Fillmore Papers, 2 vols. (Buffalo, 1907), 1:395.
- <sup>82</sup> Taylor, "Japan & Loo Choo," 32.
- <sup>83</sup> Taylor, "India," 42.
- <sup>84</sup> Taylor, "Japan & Loo Choo," 31-33.
- <sup>85</sup> 31 January 1858, Fletcher, The Diary, 6:177. See especially other entries between January through April of 1858, especially pages 200, and 214.
- <sup>86</sup> For a discussion on the role of press in the popularity of stories about exploration during the nineteenth century see Beau Riffenburgh, The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
- <sup>87</sup> 1 November 1856, Fletcher, The Diary, 5:594.
- <sup>88</sup> 16 April 1857, *ibid.*, 6:49.
- <sup>89</sup> Taylor, "Man and Climate," 29-30.
- <sup>90</sup> Taylor, A Journey, 317.
- <sup>91</sup> 30 September 1851, Rebecca Way Taylor to Bayard Taylor, folder 2492-2500, BTP, Houghton Library, Harvard College Libraries, Cambridge, Massachusetts [hereafter cited as HL].
- <sup>92</sup> Taylor, "A Familiar Letter," in At Home and Abroad, 2<sup>nd</sup> series (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1862), 11.
- <sup>93</sup> Taylor, A Visit, vi.
- <sup>94</sup> Taylor, "The Philosophy of Travel," 11, Lecture Box, BTC, CCHS.
- <sup>95</sup> Taylor, "Diary in Egypt," item 46, Box 9, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>96</sup> Taylor to Rebecca Way Taylor, December 1844, Life and Letters, 1:51.
- <sup>97</sup> Taylor, A Journey, 1-2.
- <sup>98</sup> The preface was written at New York in July 1854. Perhaps the disclaimer was intended to deflect attention from an objective he had failed to meet.
- <sup>99</sup> Taylor, "A Familiar Letter," in At Home and Abroad, series 2, 12.
- <sup>100</sup> *ibid.*, 14.
- <sup>101</sup> Taylor, A Journey, 323.
- <sup>102</sup> Bayard Taylor, The Lands of the Saracen; or, pictures of Palestine, Asia Minor, Sicily, and Spain (New York: Putnam, 1855), 27.
- <sup>103</sup> Elliot Morison, "Old Bruin," Commodore Matthew C. Perry, 1794-1858 (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1967).
- <sup>104</sup> Quoted in John Kirtland Wright, Geography in the Making; the American Geographical Society, 1851-1951 (New York: Published by the Society, 1952), 11-12.
- <sup>105</sup> Conwell, Life of Bayard Taylor, 236.
- <sup>106</sup> 1 April 1854, Fletcher, The Diary, 5:201.
- <sup>107</sup> 10 February 1855, *ibid.*, 5:359. Also see the Indianapolis Daily Journal February 19, 1855. This was itself reprinted from the Washington D.C. National Intelligencer.

- <sup>108</sup> Calvin Fletcher's comments on his son's Observer article see 25 June 1854, Fletcher, The Diary, 5:242. James Cooley Fletcher and Daniel P. Kidder, Brazil and the Brazilians (Philadelphia: Childs and Peterson, 1856).
- <sup>109</sup> Fletcher, The Diary, 5:569.
- <sup>110</sup> Taylor, A Journey, 307.
- <sup>111</sup> See J[oe]l E[dson] Rockwell, Scenes and Impressions Abroad (New York, Carter, 1860).
- <sup>112</sup> For an excellent overview of the cultural tension surrounding the relationship between the United States and England see Stephen Spender, Love-Hate Relations: English and American Sensibilities (New York: Random House, 1974).
- <sup>113</sup> Henry P. Tappan, A Step from the New World to the Old, and Back Again: With Thoughts on the Good and Evil in Both, 2 vols. (New York: Appleton, 1852) 1:123.
- <sup>114</sup> Caroline M. Kirkland, Holidays Abroad: or, Europe from the West, 2 vols. (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1849) 1:305.
- <sup>115</sup> Henry B. McLellan, Journal of a Residence in Scotland, and a Tour through England, France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy (Boston: Allen & Ticknor, 1834) 144.
- <sup>116</sup> Daniel C. Eddy, Europa: or, Scenes and Society in England, France, Italy, and Switzerland (Boston: Charles C. Little & James Brown, 1849) 172.
- <sup>117</sup> For examples, see Samuel Prime, "the white slaves of Europe" in his Travels in Europe and the East; a year in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Austria, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Syria, Palestine and Egypt, 2 vols. (New York: Harper, 1855) 1:122; also see John O'Sullivan, "White Slavery," Democratic Review, 11 (September, 1842): 261.
- <sup>118</sup> For an example of the anti-slavery defense, see John Mitchell, Notes from Over Seas; Consisting of Observations Made in Europe in the Years 1843 and 1844, 2 vols. (New York: Gates & Stedman, 1845). For an example of a pro-slavery attack on the English working class, see E. K. Washington, Echoes of Europe; or, World Pictures of Travel (Philadelphia: Challen, 1860). For a detailed discussion of this theme, see Allison Lockwood, Passionate Pilgrims: The American Traveler in Great Britain, 1800-1914 (New York: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1981), Chapter 10.
- <sup>119</sup> MacGavock, A Tennessean Abroad; or, Letters from Europe, Africa, and Asia (New York: Redfield, 1854), 63.
- <sup>120</sup> Taylor, A Visit 268.
- <sup>121</sup> Taylor, "India," 31.
- <sup>122</sup> Henry Colman, European Life and Manners; in familiar letters to friends, 2 vols. (Boston: Little & Brown, 1849) 2:13.
- <sup>123</sup> John Mitchell, Notes from Overseas: Consisting of Observations Made in Europe in the Years 1843 and 1844, 2 vols. (New York: Gates & Stedman, 1845) 1:118-119.
- <sup>124</sup> Henry Martin Field, "Wales and the Welsh," Observer, 6 August 1847. Found in Scrapbook, Field Family Papers, Stockbridge Library Association, Historical Room, Stockbridge, Massachusetts.
- <sup>125</sup> Henry Martyn Field, "The Irish," Observer, 17 August 1847. Found in Scrapbook, Field Family Papers, Stockbridge Library Association, Historical Room, Stockbridge, Massachusetts.
- <sup>126</sup> Warren Isham, The Mud Cabin; or, The Character and Tendency of British Institutions (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1853), 93.
- <sup>127</sup> Train, An American.
- <sup>128</sup> Isaac Mickle, A Gentleman, 110.
- <sup>129</sup> Sidney George Fisher, A Philadelphia Perspective, 306.
- <sup>130</sup> William Ware, Sketches of European Capitals (Boston: Phillips, Sampson & Co., 1851), 295.
- <sup>131</sup> Caroline Kirkland, Holidays Abroad, 2:507.
- <sup>132</sup> Train, An American, 268.
- <sup>133</sup> James Gordon Bennett, New York Herald, 23 October 1843.
- <sup>134</sup> Train, An American, 354.
- <sup>135</sup> Train's growing Anglophobia can be seen in his books Spread-Eagleism (1859), Downfall of England (1865), and An American Eagle in a British Cage (1868).
- <sup>136</sup> For Taylor's description of the Exhibition see his Tribune letters between October 1851 and December of 1852.

<sup>137</sup> Exhibits also came from all parts of the world, including India and the recent white colonies of Australia and New Zealand that constituted the British Empire. Over 6 million visitors marveled at the achievements of the industrial revolution in Europe and the United States.

<sup>138</sup> Accurate estimates of U. S. visitors are impossible but the American commissioner William Drew estimated, based on the guest registry at the American exhibit, that by mid-summer as many as 4,000 may have visited the Fair. "I am constantly meeting faces that I have the habit of confronting in Broadway, Nassau Street and City Hall," said Wilkes. On the number of visitors see William A. Drew, Glimpses and Gatherings during a Voyage and Visit to London and the Great Exhibition in the Summer of 1851 (Augusta: Homan & Manley, 1851), 322. Horace Greeley, Glances at Europe: In a Series of Letters from Great Britain, France, Italy, Switzerland, etc., during the Summer of 1851 (New York: DeWitt & Davenport, 1851), 21.

<sup>139</sup> George Wilkes, Europe in a Hurry (New York: Long, 1853), 40. For a more thorough discussion of the response of American travelers to the Exhibition see Lockwood's excellent survey in chapter 12 of her Passionate Pilgrims.

<sup>140</sup> Greeley, Glances at Europe, 36-37.

<sup>141</sup> Samuel S. Cox, A Buckeye Abroad: or, Wanderings in Europe and the Orient (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1852), 6.

<sup>142</sup> When the civil unrest predicted by some—those undoubtedly made wary by recent events—did not materialize, observers like Arthur Cleveland Coxe assumed a more optimistic attitude towards the future. Coxe, a man "who sees and understands the faults of our own times" and a skeptic of the Great Exhibition "must now frankly own" to his mistakes. "The whole Exhibition was indeed strongly marked by the spirit of the age." Arthur Cleveland Coxe, Impressions of England; or, Sketches of English Scenery and Society (New York: Dana & Co., 1856), 65.

<sup>143</sup> Taylor enthusiastically reported on the lay of the first telegraphic cable between the nations, thus uniting the two great English-speaking peoples of the world.

<sup>144</sup> David F. Dorr, A Colored Man Around the World; by a Quadroon (Cleveland: privately published, 1858), 19.

<sup>145</sup> Drew, Glimpses and Gatherings, 357-358. Two of the most celebrated victories were the McCormick Reapers top award among agricultural inventions and the World Cup victory of the yacht "America."

<sup>146</sup> John B. Ireland, Wall Street to Cashmere (New York: M. Doolady, [1860]) 268.

<sup>147</sup> Calvin Colton, The Last Seven Years of the Life of Henry Clay (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1856), 223-224, quoted in Strout, American Image, 54. On Kossuth's visit see Strout, American Image, 55-56.

<sup>148</sup> Taylor, "India," 15.

<sup>149</sup> Conwell, Life of Bayard Taylor, 223-224.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>152</sup> Train, An American, 316.

<sup>153</sup> Conwell, Life of Bayard Taylor, 235.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 236-237.

<sup>155</sup> Bayard Taylor, Japan in Our Day (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Co., 1877 [1871]), 19.

<sup>156</sup> Taylor, "Japan," 26.

<sup>157</sup> Taylor, Japan, 27.

<sup>158</sup> Elsewhere, Taylor even used the notion of Caucasianism to explain the progressive nature of the Japanese, and perhaps also to suggest why that nation was more congenitally suited to having been the first to fall under the sway of American Empire. Years after his return to the United State and in the midst of Japan's dramatic rise during the Meiji Period Taylor wrote: "The Japanese people offer more than one problem to the ethnologist as well as the historian" because "the origin of the race" remains in doubt. "[M]en of science who have examined them in Yezo and the Kurile Islands, are of the opinion that they form a branch of the great Aryan (or Caucasian) family—probably the only branch which has been separated and pushed aside in the movements of other races." See Taylor, Japan, 249-250. The argument was again popularized by the missionary educator William Elliot Griffis, who taught some years in Japan. Many may not have been as generous with whiteness as either Taylor or Griffis, but the perception that class rather than race dictated English policy, accompanied by the belief that American society was

dedicated to white racial unity, fueled belief in a distinct American race. That drew a subtle line between the United States and England. It also buttressed belief that the United States had a unique destiny.

<sup>159</sup> On the influence of Taylor on the thinking of William Eliot Griffis, see his college diaries in the William Eliot Griffis Collection, Rutgers Special Collections, New Brunswick, New Jersey. For his impact on Francis Hall see Japan Through American Eyes: The Journal of Francis Hall, ed. F. G. Notehelfer (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001) 11-12.

<sup>160</sup> Mickel, A Gentleman, 119.

<sup>161</sup> For a broad interpretation of the role of whiteness in cultural and political discourse of the nineteenth-century see Alexander Saxton, The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Verso, 1990), and George M. Fredrickson, The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914 (New York, 1871).

<sup>162</sup> See Edmund Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia (New York, 1975) and James Oakes, The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders (New York: Vintage, 1982).

<sup>163</sup> See David R. Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class (New York: Verso, 1991) and Matthew Frye Jacobson, Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

<sup>164</sup> See James Kirk Paulding, Slavery in the United States (New York, 1836) and The Diverting History of John Bull and Brother Jonathan by Hector Bull—us (New York, 1835).

<sup>165</sup> "A New Race of Americans," The Ladies Repository 7 (March 1847): 89-94.

<sup>166</sup> As with so many, race provided Taylor with a sweeping model of understanding. Climate takes the leading role in Taylor's grand racial drama having sharply limited a races development in the past and its hopes for the future. He divides man into eight separate races each distinguished by unique physical and psychological characteristics that are "deeply rooted." See his lecture "Man and Climate," 5.

<sup>167</sup> Taylor, A Visit, 273.

<sup>168</sup> Kirkland, Holidays Abroad, 2:507.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 4, 6.

<sup>170</sup> Taylor, "Man and Climate," 10.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-27

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 24, 47.

<sup>173</sup> Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography, edited by James Grant Wilson, John Fiske and Stanley L. Klos. 6 vol. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1887-1889).

<sup>174</sup> Brantz Mayer, Mexico, Aztec, Spanish and Republican: A Historical, Geographical, Political, Statistical and Social Account of That Country, 2 vols. (Hartford: S. Drake, 1851), 2:155.

<sup>175</sup> Taylor, "Man and Climate," 56.

<sup>176</sup> See Bayard Taylor, Littell's Living Age 52 (Jan-March 1857). For an example of the way his work influenced reader see Calvin Fletcher's diary entry for 13<sup>th</sup> of January 1857. Fletcher, The Diary, 6:13. See footnote below for more on Taylor's efforts to popularize Humboldt.

<sup>177</sup> Taylor later gave lectures on Humboldt and wrote the introduction to the first American biography of the man. He also authored an essay "Humboldt" which described his first meetings with the geographer in 1856 and 1857. The article was later reprinted in Taylor, Home and Abroad, 2<sup>nd</sup> series (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1862). I will discuss Taylor's relationship with Humboldt in a later chapter. For a discussion of Gilpin, again see Smith, Virgin Land, chapter 3, especially pages 39-41. Taylor believed that climate conditions dictated some limits of the expansion of Caucasian civilization. "The history of the world shows that Civilization, embodied in the white race," has always evolved within certain "limits of the climate which is most favorable to human development." The main stock of the "progressive" Caucasian race "did not deviate greatly, in its main course, from the central portion of the temperate zone—the golden mean between the two extremes of heat and cold." In this climactic zone nature puts man to sufficient test to produce progress. Colonies of Caucasians beyond these limits, Taylor argues, rarely succeed. While this "knowledge should restrain our national ambitions" it also means that the world within those limits is destined to be the home of Caucasians and the people outside of it to be subservient. "Man and Climate," 47-48, 30.

<sup>178</sup> Guyot popularized the views of Humboldt in a series of lectures in 1848. Taylor, who first became familiar with Guyot when the lectures were widely reported on in newspapers throughout the country,

---

subsequently read and reread his best selling book based on these lectures entitled The Earth and Man. Arnold Guyot, The Earth and Man: Lectures on Comparative Physical Geography, In Its Relation to the History of Mankind (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1860). For a discussion of Guyot see Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950), 41-43. Joseph Parrish Thompson, Photographic Views of Egypt (Boston: J. P. Jewett and Company, 1856), see especially 267-269.

<sup>179</sup> Bayard Taylor, The National Ode (Boston: William F. Gill, 1877).

## Chapter 6

### The Sublimation of Passion: Fantasies of the Exotic Other

The readers of Taylor's travel books were regularly treated to sensational morsels, passages that excited their passions, and kept them returning to his writing in the hopes of illicit reward. In A Journey to Central Africa the author titillated his audience with a description of a dance performed for him one evening at Luxor. Among the dancers was a fifteen year old girl named "Apple-Blossom" who was "small and slightly formed, dark-skinned, and might have been called beautiful." "Among the singers was one named Bemba [whose] hair was tossed back from her shoulders; [and her] hand, tinged with henna, held the jasmine tube of her pipe in a hundred different attitudes."

The dance commenced with a slow movement, both hands being lifted above the head, while the jingling bits of metal on their shawls and two miniature cymbals of brass, fastened to the thumb and middle finger, kept time to the music. As the dancers became animated, their motions were more rapid and violent, and the measure was marked, not in pirouettes and flying bounds, as on the boards of Frank theatres, but by a most wonderful command over the muscles of the chest and limbs. Their frames vibrated with the music like the strings of the violin, and as the song grew wild and stormy towards its close, the movements, had they not accorded with it, would have resembled those of a person seized with some violent nervous spasm. [...] [T]hey marked a circle of springing bounds, in which their figures occasionally reminded me of the dancing nymphs of Greek sculpture [...] like forms taken from the frieze of a temple to Bacchus or Pan. [...] Apple-Blossom, who followed in a dance [...] pleased me far better. [...] [Her dance] if barbaric, was as poetic as her native palm tree. She was lithe as a serpent, and agile as a young panther, and some of her movements were most extraordinary, in the nerve and daring required to execute them, and to introduce them without neglecting the rhythm of the dance. More than once she sank slowly back, bending her knees forward, till her head and shoulders touched the floor, and then, quick as a flash, shot flying into the air, her foot alighting in exact time with the thump of the drum. She had the power of moving her body from side to side, so that it curved like a snake from the hips to the shoulders, and once I thought that, like Lamia, she was about to resume her ancient shape, and slip out of sight through some hole in the ruined walls. [...] [E]very muscle [of her body] was agitated with the exertion of her movements. The song was pervaded with a strange, passionate tremolo, unlike any thing I ever heard before. The burden was: "I am alone; my family and my friends are all dead; the plague has destroyed

them. Come, then, to me, and be my beloved, for I have no other to love me." Her gestures exhibited a singular mixture of the abandonment of grief, and the longing of love. While her body swayed to and fro with the wild, sad rhythm of the words, she raised both arms before her till the long sleeves fell back and covered her face: then opening them in wistful entreaty, sang the last line of the chorus[.]<sup>1</sup>

The dancers were temptation. In his private diary he described "warmth of blood seeing dancers."<sup>2</sup> In the book, however, Taylor did not publicly comment on what felt. He left the readers to enjoy the scene in their own private way.

Sensational themes of vivid sexual allusion, violence, and prurient accounts of foreign people were common in antebellum America. In Typee, Melville's story about life among the South Sea islanders, he give us this stirring image of a native named Kory-Kory sitting astride a log endeavoring to make fire with stick.

At first Kory-Kory goes to work leisurely, but gradually quickens his pace, and waxing warm in the employment, drives the stick furiously along the smoking channel, plying his hands to and fro with amazing rapidity, the perspiration starting from every pore. As he approaches the climax of his effort, he paints and gasps for breath, and his eyes almost start from their sockets with the violence of his exertions. [...] Suddenly he stops, becomes perfectly motionless. His hands still retain their hold of the smaller stick, which is pressed convulsively against the farther end of the channel [...] The next moment a delicate wreath of smoke curls spirally into the air, [...] and Kory-Kory, almost breathless, dismounts from his steed.<sup>3</sup>

So common was this use of the foreign other as a way of enjoying elicit impulses that Taylor later felt comfortable poking fun at that symbol of stogy Puritanism in his day—the Bostonian—and the hypocritical fantasy of release in Paris, that other great den of foreign inequity.

The genuine Bostonian, is the most complacent of mortals. With his clean shirt on, and his umbrella under his arm, he sits upon his pedestal of Quincy granite, and reads his mild, unexceptionable newspaper. He believes in Judge Story and Daniel Webster, reads the poems of Hannah Gould and George Lunt, votes for Bell and Everett, and hopes he will go to Paris when he dies. I have sometimes wondered whether all the Bostonians postpone their Parisian delights until after

death. Is there nothing volcanic under this cold lava? No indulgence in improprieties, all the more attractive, because secret?<sup>4</sup>

Such sensational imagery surrounding exotic scenes was hardly new.

Nevertheless it took on greater importance in mid-nineteenth century. The tradition of investing Otherness with transgressive potential made travel a powerful metaphor in the emerging market. Scenes of exotic encounter could transform the act of work (as in Melville's example of making a fire) and consumption (as in Taylor's example of being entertained by dancers) into the satisfaction of erotic impulses. Their fulfillment constituted a release from the ethos of economic and moral self-discipline, a substitute way of satisfying subversive impulses.

In the emerging industrial city the loosening of traditional society left an opening for people to explore pleasures that undermined values of personal restraint and delayed gratification. Opportunists in the expanding market were all too willing to cater to these wants. Books, theater, consumer goods, and advertisements intensified sexual and violent desire by giving them a place where at least in the mind of observers the fulfillment could take place.

Conflicted by the pursuit of gratification Americans responded by turning to the legends like those of the South Seas, the tantalizing images of the harem, and the pleasures of opium dens. Through sensationalism bourgeois Americans could enjoy the cathartic release of unacceptable impulses enflamed by examples of material extravagance and the lurid possibilities of the urban underworld.

In his own life Taylor's drift towards sensationalism accelerated in the late 1840s after his move to New York City. The city was an environment where the moral contradictions between self-interest and self-sacrificing restraint were producing strains

that the beautifying beliefs of genteel sentiment, romantic aspiration, and the heroics of American mission could not entirely dispel. Skepticism towards these ideals gave Taylor a new appreciation for the self-interested pursuit of gratification. The results drew him to a more lurid fascination with the decadent and sensual Other as a means to enjoy illicit impulses without embracing them.

### **A Culture of Passionate Extremes**

Fascination with the foreign Other had at least part of its roots in the growing acceptance of sensual and material display. The grand homes of the wealthy became the site of lavish and increasingly public entertainment. By the mid-1840s elite figures like August Belmont, the New Yorker financial representative of the Rothschilds, reportedly spent the sum of \$60,000 a year on entertainment.<sup>5</sup> This figure was certainly inflated. Nonetheless, consider this: a tradesman had an average annual income of \$300 at this time. Even a fraction of the sum Belmont was purported to spend would have seemed staggering. Like the homes themselves these sumptuous private entertainments become fodder for the penny press and their readers.<sup>6</sup>

Much of the revelry indulged in by the elite had cosmopolitan feel. Belmont and others mimicked the grandness of European “society.” The penny press reported on these developments with a republican snicker that veiled envy. A pivotal event in both the emerging embrace of luxury by elites and public fascination with the phenomenon was the Brevoort masked ball in March of 1840. Henry Brevoort Jr., head of one of the city’s oldest Knickerbocker families, used the occasion to reinvent the old New York tradition of masked balls. James Gordon Bennett, publisher of the New York Herald, convinced Brevoort, who was eager to manage the public reports of the event, to allow one of his

reporters to cover the lavish affair from inside the Brevoort's palatial Fifth Avenue home. The city's finest arrived dressed as European royalty, historical personages, mythological figures, and in all other manner of exotic whimsy. The party was a global phantasmagoria. There were Spanish dames, pirates, picturesque European peasants, Highland chiefs, Bedouins, whiskered Mamalukes, and at least one regal Sultan, reported the Herald. Philip Hone arrived dressed as Cardinal Wolsely; Miss Matilda Barclay as the exotic Lalla-Rookh. The costumes were pivotal to the popularity of these events. Participants could without embarrassment don the mask of aristocracy. They might indulge their intimate fantasies of prestige and sensuality through various guises of decadent Otherness. With this emphasis upon lavish performance the masked ball itself was remade as a symbol of conspicuous indulgence. Sam Ward, a European-educated scion of one of the city's prominent families, congratulated Brevoort for introducing a "European fete" to America. Over the next few decades masked balls became the quintessential expression of elite excess.<sup>7</sup>

Events like these reveal that by the middle of the nineteenth-century adherence to the genteel style, the commitment to material goods, the cultivated value of leisure, and the growing sense of class consciousness had facilitated the acceptance of gratification. While the years after Taylor's birth witnessed the broadening of affluence necessary for the rise of the new middle-class, during the same period elites came to hold a staggeringly disproportionate amount of the nation's assets. Since the Revolution the richest one percent of Americans had more than doubled their portion of the nation's total wealth. Between 1825 and 1860, in particular, the disparity between the richest and poorest grew faster than at anytime in American history. According to Edward Pessen,

by 1845 New York was home to 113 individuals whose personal wealth was one million dollars or more.<sup>8</sup> John Jacob Astor, easily the richest of them all, had a fortune on same level as Nathan Mayer Rothschild, considered by many to have been the richest man in Europe at the time. Among this most affluent segment of the population a luxurious standard of living comparable to that of European aristocracy was now within their means. But at every level of society, a growing admiration for wealth and power produced among many a fascination and envy of the extravagance now enjoyed by elites.

By degrees the compromise between aristocratic tastes and republican restraint once observed by the ruling elite had begun to fade. Taylor's friend Nathaniel Parker Willis dubbed the highest circles of city society "the Upper Ten." Among them the growth of opulence weakened the delicate balance between display and restraint pursued by the culture of vernacular gentility.<sup>9</sup> Elites eager for that ever more elusive sense of cultural distinction coveted aristocratic opulence. One foreign observer described New York elite this way:

The old families, principally Dutch, in New York State are said to be most determinedly exclusive. They are called the Knickerbocker society. The new rich folks of New York are called the 'Fifth Avenue' society, or, less respectfully, the 'Codfish aristocracy.' They revenge themselves for the Knickerbocker exclusion by excluding all the lower world of New York from their circle. It is quite the old French noblesse and the new Parisian aristocracy of the Bourse.<sup>10</sup>

By 1860 the New York Illustrated magazine reported that "There are, indeed, unmistakable signs everywhere" among the city's inhabitants "of the growth of aristocratic feelings, tastes, habits and even prejudices"<sup>11</sup> Others had noticed the trend much earlier. Although "the forms of aristocracy flourish more gorgeously in their natural soil," one observer of New York society explained in 1854, "the genuine virus can be found in New York almost as readily as London, or Vienna."<sup>12</sup>

Seeking to set themselves apart, wealthy New Yorkers aggressively exploited the association of the Old World and the exotic East with decadence. Unlike the codes of sentimental emotion and genteel aesthetics the aim was to emphasize rather than downplay extravagance. The collection of art and curios intended to show taste and refinement became more exaggerated. The wealthy sought to immerse themselves in a fantasy of excesses. “The glory of Fifth Avenue is maintained,” a visiting Englishman noted, “principally by a lavish display of magnificence. The houses, furniture, and ladies’ dresses are of fabulous costliness.”<sup>13</sup> By the 1840s social observers like Lydia Marie Child reported that the wealthy were spending as much as \$10,000 decorating a room in an attempt to fashion for them a “European style of living.” The taste for Middle Eastern and Asian objects mushroomed. As the century progressed it became increasingly popular for the wealthy to decorate their parlors, private quarters, or sometimes their entire home in Oriental style. The “Oriental nook” was a scaled down version, not uncommon to middle-class homes. Home owners created these spaces for their romantic association but also to invoke the purported splendor and decadence of Oriental life: to be a sensual feast of color, texture, and aroma.<sup>14</sup>

Travelers prominently displayed the souvenirs they collected. Indeed, wags of the day suggested the appropriation of objects to impress visitors to one’s home was the cause of tourism. Indeed American travelers became famed for amassing collections of art with which festooned their homes. Taylor’s parents proudly displayed the curiosities he collected. Writing her son in 1852 Rebecca Taylor described the nook they had created with the objects he sent home.

We put one of the tables that stood in the parlor, into the back room, and spread your Mexican blanket on it, set your bust against the wall with your Heidelberg

cap on, the minerals in front, the swords, and all the other curiosities laid around in order. We have a great many to see them and admire them.<sup>15</sup>

Bottles of Egyptian sand, Persian perfumes, and Mughal scimitars completed the collection. In 1861, in the weeks after the outbreak of the Civil War, Taylor organized patrols of local farmers whom he armed with his collection of exotic weapons.

In the 1820s while New York's elite migrated from their handsome homes along lower Broadway and around Bowling Green to the more distant and exclusive environs of upper Broadway, Washington Square, Lafayette Place, St. John's Park, and then Bond Street, they built in a grand, cosmopolitan style.<sup>16</sup> Italian and Greek Revival architecture continued to dominate but more exotic styles also appeared. In the decades after the Civil War what reserve remained was all but abandoned. Vanderbilt's massive Fifth Avenue mansion was a grand if disorienting mix of Florentine doors, French furniture, Chinese vases, and African marble. The creators of these homes solemnly tried to pass such extravagance off as expressions of reverence for art. But even here their actions smacked of self-advertising. Vanderbilt, for one, had an art album of his stately home published and distributed among friends.

Just as they intended, their efforts resulted in a society increasingly divided by differences in material conditions and taste. Based on his experiences from the 1840s, Taylor described New York as a city whose urban geography exposed class differences. One, he wrote, could wander:

around the sepulchral seclusion of St. John's Park, with its obsolete gentility; or the solid plainness of East Broadway,--home of plodding and prosperous men of business; or the cosmopolitan rag-fair of Greenwich Street; or the seething lowest depth of the Five Points; the proud family aristocracy of Fifth Avenue, [all the while] involuntarily contrasting and comparing these spheres of life, each of which retained its independent motion, while revolving in the same machine.<sup>17</sup>

Away from the city elites constructed even more lavishly. Country estates in the fashion of Europe's landed aristocracy dwarfed the handsome mansions of the older colonial gentry.<sup>18</sup> The country estate Taylor built in 1859 outside of Kennett Square, Cedarcroft, came to resemble in a smaller way the extravagance of these estates. Begun as a symbol of his gentility, the home quickly became more.

[It] would contain features of architecture which 'I had seen in my wanderings over the world: There was to be a Grecian façade, with one wing Gothic and the other Saracenic; a Chinese pagoda at one corner, an Italian campanile at the other, and the pine-apple dome of a Hindoo temple between the Chimneys.

On the grounds he planted "cedars of Lebanon, the deodar of the Himalaya, the Japanese crystomeria, and the gigantic sequoia of California."<sup>19</sup> Although he had first talked of building a working farm those plans withered from lack of interest—more republican pretense than true intent. By the time numerous additions, extensive landscaping and the import of costly furnishings were complete, the genteel home had transformed into an expression of extravagance (see appendix A for photograph of the house).

Like the ornate interiors, elites built these homes to create a fantasy realm of opulence and project the social status they craved. Their spectacular dwellings quickly became popular tourist attractions. Some were featured in magazines like Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room. The impulse that fed these behaviors was complex. In his childhood Taylor pasted images of these homes into scrapbooks, and fantasized about the lives of those who lived in them. Although suspicious of ostentation and inclined to see it as a path to moral corruption, Taylor also believed that beauty and refinement were signs of spiritual beatification and wealth a sign of grace. At the same time the growing garishness strained the limits of decorous gentility and suggested that the fascination was stoked by other impulses. During the 1850s no home more obviously or as famously

strove for this exaggerated foreign effect as P. T. Barnum's Oriental mansion "Iranistan." Comprised of both Near Eastern and Asian influences the tapering minarets, ornate carvings, and vibrant colors of Barnum's Iranistan made it a spectacular sight. It became an object of national fascination before it burned in the late 1850s (see appendix A for an illustration of Barnum's Iranistan).<sup>20</sup>

In the decades after the 1830s, Oriental decorative and architectural features in particular received lavish attention by writers of fiction and travel. While the exotic continued to be used to crystallize the wish for permanence that comforted weary and anxious middle-class Americans, it increasingly invoked a sensual decadence in ways suggesting the wish for vicarious indulgence. In Irving's Allhambra, for instance, his vivid, enthusiastic descriptions of Moorish screens and decorative flourishes aimed to overwhelm the senses. He seemed intent to relish rather than condemn the builder's profligacy. Later writers turned their attention upon the splendor of the Taj Mahal. Taylor professed himself unequal to the challenge of describing the elaborate beauty of the tomb, but nonetheless devoted a chapter to doing just that. Even those constitutionally opposed to the gratification of the senses, like the Reverend William Butler, gushed at the majesty of the lush craftsmanship. "The snow white marble," he wrote, "is inlaid with flowers so delicately formed that they look like embroidery on white satin, so exquisitely is the mosaic executed in carnelian, blood-stone, agates, jasper, turquoise, lapis, lazuli, and other precious stone."<sup>21</sup>

Again, the culture of print mirrored this newfound obsession with opulence. While still frequently condemning the "decadent" displays put on by the foreign aristocracy, travel writers nevertheless poured their literary powers into the depiction of

lavish rituals, balls, and pageants. In the same spirit, another subject of attention was the colorful folk-culture encountered abroad. Here as in the hyperbolic description of decoration, architecture, and apparel, writers luxuriated in the garish experience of peasant carnival. In the carnival, as in the masquerade ball, one could invert the normal order of things by pretending to be what one was not.

These developments impacted the lives of middle-class American in a number of ways. Middle-class Americans moved to duplicate entertainments enjoyed by elites. Soon after arriving in New York Taylor had begun attending costume parties, expending considerable energy and imagination on the clothes he would wear. In the process he enjoyed the carnivalesque opportunity to gratify sensual pleasures of material opulence and lordly status that he could not experience in his daily life. By the late 1850s Taylor began to abandon his republican pretensions of the simple life. At Cedarcroft the conservative Quaker neighbors, who already disapproved of the home, grew astonished and dismayed by the wagonloads of exotic liquors and foods Taylor imported from abroad. The leers, pestering comments and malicious gossip generated by his purchases pricked Taylor's consciousness.

Americans of every class found an outlet for their craving for sensual experience in other forms of public performance and popular entertainment. In December of 1841 P. T. Barnum opened his American Museum at Broadway and Ann Street near the center of what was then downtown New York. Eight years later he bought-out the Peale Museum of Chinese curiosities. Barnum's consolidation of this collection marked the shift between patrician attitudes towards Asian objects d'art and the emergence of a popular but less refined fascination in the sensual possibilities of the Orient. While a high-brow

class conscious preoccupation with foreign objects continued to evolve, it was matched by an emerging middle-brow culture of exotic entertainment. The twenty-five cent charge for entering Barnum's museum indicates he aimed at middle-class audiences and strove to appear as educational as they were entertaining. At the same time Barnum emphasized the gaudy, outlandish, and sensual extremism of the exotic objects he packed into the building. Entering, the museum customers were transported to a realm where the rules of scale and logic seemed to disappear; stranger still these rules became inverted: up was frequently down in Barnum's museum. Indeed this topsy-turvy quality merely took advantage of a central motif of Victorian discourse about countries like China and Japan: the people there did the opposite of what was common elsewhere. As Taylor explained to audiences after his return in 1853, the fact that the "Mongolian race moved eastward, in opposition to what seems the natural current of emigration [...] is only another evidence of the fact, so often remarked, that they do everything in a contrary way to the Europeans."<sup>22</sup>

Barnum's emphasis upon inversion and the outlandish certainly provided a justification for the ridicule of the foreign Other. However this perversity also subtly invited audiences to mock the sobriety and restraint of middle-class culture. Demonstrating with certainty that Barnum's entertainments had this effect is difficult. Nevertheless there can be little doubt that audiences gained a sense of release in different venues by way of similar subject matter. Taylor was one of the many who made frequent visits to Barnum's palace of fantasy. It is likely that the museum's wonders reinforced his suspicion of emotional restraint that he attributed to the Bostonian puritan. Taylor knew that his own adventures were in some way linked to the fantastic experience

visitors had in the American Museum. Following the Jenny Lind contest, Barnum became fascinated with Taylor's travels. In the coming years Taylor maintained an intimate relationship with Barnum, whom he advised on such matters as the naming of his estate, Iranstan. Taylor was later asked by Barnum to collect curiosities. It is unclear to what extent Taylor actually worked with Barnum. Following the burning of his museum in 1865 Barnum secretly asked Taylor help to spearhead a campaign to build an American version of the British Museum. He planned to rebuild his American Museum right next door.<sup>23</sup>

If unsatisfied with the heady experiences to be found at the corner of Broadway and Ann, one had only to stroll a few blocks to the theater district. If the craze for minstrelsy described earlier was driven largely by the longing for a traditional society it also drew fans for the sheer outlandish visual and acoustic spectacle it offered. The image of the African-American slave presented in minstrel shows were of a people who, while living in a familiar and perhaps comforting state of social traditionalism, were nonetheless strange, cleverly irreverent, and only loosely bound by the rules of personal behavior expected of the largely white audience. In the coming years yellow face minstrels would serve the same function, but in the 1840s exotic acts that presented the fantastic and extreme were already common. In the months after Taylor first moved to New York, for instance, at the Bowery a troupe purporting to be "Arab Bedouins" entertained audiences with acrobatic horse tricks, sword play, and colorful clothing. Thirsting for more one could take in the delights of the "The Balabit Chinese Dancers" or "The Allambria [sic] Circus."<sup>24</sup>

The visual feast of cosmopolitan entertainment was complimented by a spirit of experimentation in gastronomic pleasures. The opening of the continental restaurant Delmonico's at 56 Beaver Street in 1837 introduced New York's elite to the refinement of French haute cuisine. In the coming years with its famed 100 page menu, 16,000 bottle wine cellar, and private eating compartments the establishment became a favorite of Taylor—who despite his never ending financial complaints seemed to find the wherewithal to dine there with some frequency. The extravagant habits Taylor acquired simply mirrored those sweeping through the ranks of the bourgeoisie, for whom the association of taste with status gave new appreciation for culinary refinement. Travel narratives and guides showed a newfound interest in the gastronomic fancies of foreign peoples, especially the wonders that graced the tables of European aristocracy, Middle-Eastern Sultans, and Chinese Mandarins.

In one of his most popular chapters of Journey to Central Africa Taylor described enthusiastically the sensual pleasures of the Arab taste for coffee and the pipe. The habit of smoking, explained Taylor, “harmonizes so thoroughly with the character of Oriental life” one is shocked to see “that no mention is made of the pipe in the Arabian Nights.” It epitomizes “that supreme patience, that wonderful repose” for which the East is justly admired. “It is strange,” he continued, “that our Continent, where the meaning of Rest is unknown, should have given to the world this great agent of Rest.”<sup>25</sup>

Taylor's attraction to the Arab's love of coffee and pipe centered on the way each was perceived to be part of a much larger culture of hedonistic leisure. In the years leading up to and after the Civil War the new emphasis upon work and production was counterbalanced to some degree and for some Americans by an increase in prosperity.

Affluence allowed for some to indulge in a more varied leisure life. This change conspired with the romantic celebration of quietude to foster interest in the sensual possibilities of relaxation. The indelible image of the foreign as lazy and indolent drew the new leisure class to look abroad. Happily this appreciation for leisure accelerated the moral reversal that started when genteel middle-class Americans began to accept cultural refinement.

Domestically one watershed event in the acceptance of pleasurable leisure occurred in the late 1830s with the opening of the International Hotel, termed the first “European Palace” style hotel in America. Its founders had, one New York elite explained, “erected a temple of luxury worthy of its votaries.”<sup>26</sup> At around the same time during the summer months, urban elites began to retire to resorts in the pursuit of conspicuous leisure. The movement between these establishments and the natural wonders near them soon became the American equivalent to the European Grand Tour. The justification of these journeys may have been the natural wonders of the Hudson, Niagara Falls, or Catskill Mountains. Yet the epicenter of the social experience was the pampering provided by the great white hotels and the pleasures of the springs in which visitors luxuriated.<sup>27</sup>

It is possible perhaps that all this talk about the decadence of the European aristocracy and the “Orient” made this emerging domestic culture of material pleasure seem less extravagant. By the early 1840s the Middle East had already become part of the traditional visit to the Old World. Aside from the pious desire to visit the Holy Lands, the Orient’s reputation for indolence was the principle attraction of the region. In the late 1840s, like the rest of the nation, Taylor read with enthusiasm the letters written

by George W. Curtis to the Tribune while he traveled in the Near East. Curtis, the son of a successful Rhode Island banker, was an independent young man who had spent his youth in intermittent efforts at college, business, and as a gadfly to the New England Transcendentalist set. In 1846 he was still without a clear plan of what profession to pursue. His indulgent but worried father agreed to pay for a trip to Europe and the Near East. It was the beginning of his son's career as a journalist and author (see appendix A for an illustration of Curtis).

Curtis' letters were modified after his return to the United States in 1849 and published as Nile Notes of a Howadji and The Howadji in Syria. These "lively, graphic, fresh, and original" narratives, as one reviewer described them, made him a sensation.<sup>28</sup> Curtis' unabashed appreciation for the leisurely ways of the Eastern approach to life contributed to the freshness of his account. On top of this, his willingness to confess to his own indulgence in the pleasures to be had cast a hedonistic light upon the narrative. By the early 1850s he was known throughout the country simply as "the Howadji."

Curtis' confessions of sensual enjoyment were exciting. His boldness also embarrassed the traditional sensibilities of many, including his indulgent father. A reviewer in the conservative American Whig Review noted disapprovingly that the:

glowing descriptions of voluptuous dances, and observations upon many and allusions to other Oriental manners and customs [...] to be decidedly objectionable in a book that is intended [...] to occupy a place in the drawing room table.<sup>29</sup>

Stung by such criticism, Curtis defended the book to his father. He was only describing a reality that other writers had failed to observe, he insisted.

When I was in Egypt I felt that the picture of impressions there had never been painted. Travelers have been either theorists and philosophers or young men with more money than brains, or professional travelers. In no book of any of these was

the essential sensuous, luxurious, languid and sense-satisfied spirit of the Eastern life as it appears to the traveler represented. I aimed to do that.<sup>30</sup>

Brisk sales nonetheless demonstrated how the less fastidious received the book.

William Dean Howell later explained the success of the book as a result of the way it satisfied his generation's luxuriant tastes.

How well that luscious expression, those gaudy alliterations, those vague allusions, those melting hues, that sadness and sweetness of the young poet's spirit satisfied the utmost desire of the time.

Longfellow confided in his journal that he and his wife had begun to read Nile Notes "with much delight." "We sailed up the [...] Nile with the poetic Howadji in the Ibis," he continued several days later. "He has caught the true spirit of the East; and there is a golden glow in his pages, as if he dipped his pencil in the sun."<sup>31</sup>

The "Ibis" was the name Curtis gave to the vessel he hired for his journey the Nile. That voyage provided the narrative thread of the first book. Thanks in part to his account the leisurely journey became the great symbol of sensual repose. Although others had already popularized the trip, the letters written by Curtis in 1849 spurred thousands to emulate him. Among them was Taylor who referred to the "Howadji" admiringly while he sailed up the Nile several years later. Like Curtis, Taylor recounted his experience in sensuous detail. Each evening following dinner, with coffee and pipes in hand "we seat ourselves on the deck," he wrote:

and drink to its fullness the balm of this indescribable repose, The sun goes down behind the Libyan Desert in a broad glory of purple and rosy lights; the Nile is calm and unruffled, the palms stand as if sculptured in jasper and malachite, among the torn and ragged sides of the Arabian Mountains, pouring through a hundred fissures the sand of the plains above, burn with a deep crimson luster, as if smoldering from some inward fire. The splendor soon passes off and they stand for some minutes in dead, ashy paleness. The sunset has now deepened into orange, in the midst of which a large planet shines whiter than the moon. A second glow falls upon the mountains, and this time of a pale, but intense yellow

hue, which gives them the effect of a transparent painting. The palm-groves are dark below and the sky dark behind them; they alone, the symbols of perpetual desolation, are transfigured by the magical illumination. Scarcely a sound disturbs the solemn magnificence of the hour. Even our full-throated Arabs are silent, and if a wave gurgles against the prow, it slides softly back into the river, as if rebuked for the venture. We speak but little, and then mostly in echoes of each other's thoughts. "This is more than mere enjoyment of Nature," said my friend, on such an evening: "it is worship."<sup>32</sup>

The trends towards conspicuous leisure and sensual indulgence accelerated in the years after the Civil War, earning the period the label "The Gilded Age" from Mark Twain and Charles Warren Stoddard's novel of the same name. The satirists opened each chapter of their novel with a quote from foreign realms, perhaps because it seemed that the lavish fantasies of the "Arabian Nights" had become a living part of America life. Both Twain and Stoddard had visited the exotic regions of the world. Stoddard wrote his own sensuous account of travel up the Nile in 1876. Their experiences brought the connection between foreign decadence and domestic excesses so clearly to their minds. Similar experiences had certainly fitted their predecessors to comment upon the culture of conspicuous leisure emerging in the United States. Shortly after his return Curtis wrote a third book of travel, this time about the pleasure palaces of the American Grand Tour, suggestively embellished with the Orientalist title Lotus-Eating. As he prospered Taylor too graduated from the romantic pedestrian tours he had once made of the same region in his youth. The Tribune sent Taylor to write a series on the vacation spots of the Northeast and then to the exclusive resorts along the mid-Atlantic coast. Interestingly it was after both men became famed as travelers to remote and fantastic lands that they were prized as reporters of the lavish lives of the nation's elite. This may suggest the degree to which the extraordinary possibilities of personal gratification offered by wealth

and power bore some relationship in the popular imagination with images of life in distant lands.

Whether it was the willingness of elites to engage in the ostentatious display of wealth or the subtle celebration of it in the popular press, the changes noted by the Herald appeared to be part of larger trends. Individual Americans were becoming more willing to countenance self-interested behavior that included the gratification of selfish ambitions or private passions.

What one senses in Taylor's life is that his rapid success in the years after his move to New York City masked what was a troubling psychological and cultural transition for the young man. His misfortune in Phoenixville, despite his statements to the contrary, had clearly shaken his faith in the idea that discipline and self-denial would all but guarantee his future. Heightening his concern was the emergence of what he described as a growing "yearning for ease," "pleasure," and a lustful "weakness of body." These feelings tested, as he said, his "patience and self-denial."<sup>33</sup>

### **The Pressures of Illicit Desire**

That these concerns arose during a period when Taylor moved to New York was no coincidence. Looking back over these years the New York Herald concluded that:

Our dresses and our diamonds were as rich and costly as any aristocrat's; our equipages as splendid; our residences as palatial; our servants as gaily liveried. Here in New York we have been giving dinners, soirees, receptions and fetes champetre which princes could not outrival, and which princes attended. We have been flashing about in coaches and carriages drawn by blooded horses. We have been dining, and wineing and pampering ourselves.<sup>34</sup>

At the same time the pressures to transgress community values and pursue individual gain at the expense of others was also on the rise. Ruthless self-interest seemed a necessity. As Emerson said as he cast his eyes over the competitive

environment of the city, America had become a place where “young men were born with knives in their brains.”<sup>35</sup> The pressures of competitive individualism had given rise to a society that celebrated aggression. This too threatened the values of restraint, self-denial, and civic responsibility at the heart of republicanism. Society was pushing a trend towards the indulgence of both sensual and aggressive impulses.

Taylor’s experience in the city was indicative of the way new temptations afflicted members of the aspiring middle class by challenging their sense of identity. Amid the lucrative possibilities of the city Taylor’s letters and journals reveal a shift away from an emphasis upon romantic dreams to practical matters of professional advancement and the accumulation of wealth. During his early years he entertained himself visiting the finely appointed homes of the affluent, and attended the soirees and balls. Letters reveal that at many of the social gatherings he attended Taylor spent energy in self-promotion and building professional connections with would-be employers. Indeed many of his early jobs were probably as much a result of these efforts as his talent and professional connections. As he gained confidence he did not shy away from playing one employer against another, or negotiating the best possible financial deal. At the first opportunity he also began aggressively to invest the money he made. Throughout his life he displayed a level headed approach to issues of practical finance. He typically did not let his romantic notions, in other words, affect his professional and financial decisions. For all of his sentimental complaints about absence from Mary Agnew and his family, for instance, he willingly refused respectable jobs that would have brought him closer to both. Taylor’s success posed a threat to aspects of his identity. His decision to place material over romantic considerations brought criticism from some of his otherwise loyal

friends. They politely pointed out how he undermined his own artistic endeavors in the pursuit of popular success. Occasionally they chided him for his hypocrisy.<sup>36</sup>

Like his autobiographical double in John Godfrey's Fortune Taylor clearly became mesmerized by the extravagant pleasures and possibilities of America's "Vanity Fair." Yet like John Godfrey he was never fully comfortable with his developing taste for gratification or worldly ambition. In what must be read less as a warning of what might have gone wrong than as commentary by Taylor on what he thought of the actual success, John's fate declines as his material prospects advanced, because, in the process, John becomes vulnerable and eventually succumbs to the darker side of his nature. During this period Taylor felt his identity as a responsible individual threatened by his growing willingness to embrace his less idealistic desires, whether they be prurient or material.

Part of the trouble, of course, was the overbearing sense of duty weighing upon his conscience. His unscrupulous partner in Phoenixville had left him with debts that were not his, yet the maintenance of his good name required him to pay.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, fighting Mary Agnew's prolonged illness—paying for doctors, taking time off of work—placed a mounting financial burden on him. The darkening prospects of her future also accelerated his need to achieve the financial independence necessary to marry and bring her to New York. And then, he felt the growing responsibility to support his own family who, in what became a problem for him throughout his life, were in constant need of financial support. Finally, at the same time that all of these worldly material concerns weighed upon him, he held fast to an antithetical dream: the wish to become a poet whose name would mean something tomorrow rather than today.

Whatever reservations this dream may have prompted in him, Taylor could not alter the fact that larger changes had shifted attitudes towards worldly success. He was being driven, like many of his generation, towards material rather than transcendent concerns. Gratification in the emerging consumer culture and competitive marketplace was increasingly becoming identified with Americanism itself. The culture of consumption and competition exploded in the post-bellum period. The fulfillment of desire was steadily transformed into the definition of liberty; and the capacity for indulgence was becoming a new measure of freedom.

As challenging as all this may have been the fact was that the new urban centers offered temptations that were in the eyes of many far worse than the pursuit of material gain. Other passions had opportunity for expression in the vast unregulated human marketplace of the city. The glittering indulgence of elite consumption and the growing legitimization of greed were paired against the darker attraction of lust and irrational violence more frequently associated with the rough but free milieu of the New York demimonde. At the lowest reaches of the “Europeanized” American city with which Taylor became familiar after arriving in New York, moral corruption seemed rampant in the form of crime, prostitution, and addiction to vices of alcohol and gambling. Like the excesses of elites this world exposed the capacity of humans for exploitation, abuse, and lust. Pursuing his job as a city reporter for the Tribune Taylor entered the darkest precincts of the city and discovered there a brutal, savage, but alluring world of base impulses and gratification. If the rise of urban poor, foreign immigrants, social unrest, unscrupulous pursuit of gain, or the excess of elites were not enough to frighten the sober middle class then they had only to take a stroll through the streets of the city’s less

respectable districts to fear for the moral decline of the nation. “No one can walk the length of Broadway without meeting some hideous groups of ragged girls, from twelve years-old down,” wrote George Templeton Strong. These vixens had “thief written in their cunning eyes and whore on their depraved faces.” This “whorearchy,” as he called it, was only one of the “social diseases of a great city.”<sup>38</sup> The violent, unregulated back alleys of the city where pleasure, violence, and lust seemed unrestrained, were home to crimes of every sort. Caught in the middle, urban dwellers felt fear and anger.

No small part of this was an anxiety over the fate of their souls. “In moving to New York,” Taylor wrote fatalistically, “I am going into a world of corruption and that will corrupt me.”<sup>39</sup> As moralists had long warned, the burgeoning cities of mid-nineteenth century America did present migrants with an ambiguous moral environment. Life there necessitated behavior once thought unacceptable. New arrivals to the city were also tempted in ways they found difficult to resist. Taylor felt both. “There is not in the world—and probably never has been,” Taylor reflected after 1865, a place that “encourages vice [...] more [...] than New York.”<sup>40</sup> The fact that many felt drawn to and excited by such dangers only multiplied the fear.

Taylor may have relished the material rewards and pleasures that financial success would bring, but he also lusted after the less respectable sensual dimensions of city life. His letters from New York in the late 1840s proudly described the way he hobnobbed with the rich and famous. It was evident too that the city’s theaters, operas, bars, and restaurants pleased him. Whatever trace of his temperance beliefs remained after Europe all but disappeared in New York. Taylor attacked the pleasures of the city with gusto. In this environment Taylor’s control over his sexual urges suffered. While

there is little evidence to suggest the young man took full advantage of the sexual opportunities offered by the city, he experienced mounting difficulty containing his desires.<sup>41</sup> He clearly enjoyed the flirtation to be had at soirees. The prostitute ridden streets of the city afforded ample opportunity to “err” as Taylor wrote in his journal. It is clear he longed to release the desires building within him. Trolling the streets of Five Points Taylor explained that he came to experience what he called the “wilder element” of his nature.<sup>42</sup> In his journals he upbraided himself for a “weakness of body.” It is also evident he used thoughts of his obligations to Mary in order to hold himself in line, a problematic strategy given evidence in his journals of a mounting sense of sexual frustration in the unconsummated relationship.<sup>43</sup>

Taylor’s personal trial was in some ways indicative of the challenge that loomed before middle-class Americans. Driven by an ambition to succeed and a strict sense of personal discipline he nonetheless at times fantasized about sexual and violent gratification. In other moments, he sunned himself in thoughts of luxuriant European tours, the life of comfortable leisure, and the pleasures of a country estate. Trapped in his stuffy Tribune office he wrote to Mary:

I lose myself often in day-dreams of our future home [...] I could most cheerfully give up my hopes of a higher field of action, and sit myself down contented here [...] Provided that [...] we have first fulfilled our promised pilgrimage to Europe and the East.<sup>44</sup>

Taylor’s response here was characteristic of many within the bourgeoisie. He looked toward the foreign to find a substitute for the longings for leisure and the satisfaction of primal pleasures missing from his real life.

Recognition of this psychic conflict casts a different light on Taylor’s decision to travel to California and Asia. During the late 1840s a new theme moves to the fore of

Taylor's impulse to travel: he began to evince an almost feverish wish to undertake journeys to less civilized lands. The objective of these voyages seemed to differ from his previous travels. He thirsted for more "primitive" lands of the American West, South America, Africa, and Asia. "Shut up in these brick walls" of the Tribune he explained, I began to "think it would do me good if I could turn savage for about two weeks every year."<sup>45</sup> In the "wilds" of the West among the "Mexicans and Indians" Taylor wanted to indulge what he called the "animal part" of "my nature." Perhaps in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia he imagined that he could allow the "wilder element" he experienced in the Five Points of New York to run free. What is clear is that he shared this experience with many of his contemporaries.

An example in this regard was Ingram Fletcher, the fifth son of Indianapolis businessman Calvin Fletcher. Like his brother before him Ingram was raised reading foreign travel accounts and under the hard discipline of their father. In 1853 at the age of eighteen he accompanied his mother to Lake Superior from where he joined an Indian missionary party headed for the territories in present day North Dakota. He returned the next year on a dog sled and dressed like an Indian. After an unsuccessful stay at home he set-out again for the North. An independent spirit, Ingram seemed to find escape from the overweening presence of his father in the freedom over the wilderness.<sup>46</sup>

In the foreign, or the representations of it that they could indulge by buying a ticket, Americans found an avenue to release these desires. Taylor's office at the Tribune was situated near the theater district. For him and many others exotic spectacles were a daily part of their lives.<sup>47</sup> At dime-museums, special exhibitions, and in theatrical performances to which Taylor's job gave "free access" there was sometimes a brazen

exploitation of the salacious possibilities of the foreign. Even in the sober presentations of archeological evidence, audiences delighted when they discovered the profane; as when George Glidden un-wrapped a “female” mummy only to discover, to the immense pleasure of the audience, a desiccated erection.

In the years just before and after Taylor arrived in New York, its theaters had profited handsomely from eye raising acts. Joseph Steven Jones’s drama “The Usurpers” harkened back to the exploits of William Eaton, the United States consul in Tripoli during the Barbary Wars nearly four decades before. It differed in some fascinating respects from James Ellison’s popular play “The American Captive” mentioned earlier. Jones’s “Usurpers” features a mix of sensuality and violent action missing in its predecessor. In his Orient, Jones places a greater emphasis upon the sensual decadence of the local elite, the erotic possibilities of the harem, and the wantonness of the local people. Finally, the violence unleashed by the Americans in the attempt to save their countrymen was far more ferocious. In short, Jones’s play revealed a graphic intensification of erotic and violent imagery of the foreign that had evolved in the intervening years. Other plays, many with provocative titles like “The Savage and the Maiden,” “The Foulah Slave,” and the opera “The Revolt of the Harem” exploited the erotic potential of Eastern themes.<sup>48</sup>

In the years between 1847 and 1850 Taylor might have spent an evening watching, to name but a few, the rousing movements of “The Arab Girls,” “The Bedouin Maids,” or “The Maids of Persia.” The first was described as a troupe of “beautiful” women performing “extraordinary feats” of acrobatics. Unlike the entertainments emphasizing the comforting and nostalgic innocence of traditional societies these acts

had a stimulating, often lurid, and sometimes an even semi-pornographic dimension to them. Men queuing to see the troupe of beautiful European female “fine arts” models performing “classical” tableau vivant—by which was meant semi-nude—knew exactly what they were going to see.<sup>49</sup>

Interest in more exotic peoples allowed an even greater exploitation of sensationalistic potential of the Other under the guise of naturalistic exhibition. Natives of distant regions where the newest explorations were taking place soon appeared upon public stage in America. One example, the “Two Cannibals of the Islands of in the South Pacific” first appeared at Tammany Hall in 1831, before becoming a standard feature at the Peale Museum. The two men in this show named, “Sunday” and “Monday” in an obvious reference to Robinson Crusoe, were depicted as wild and unrepentant savages brought to the United States at great danger by Captain Benjamin Morrell.<sup>50</sup>

Similar exhibitions of black “Hottentots,” “Amazons,” “Zulus,” and “Bushmen” toured the United States. Like the so-called “cannibals” of the South Pacific these men and women were presented in “primitive native dress,” sometimes under restraints “for the protection of the audience,” and frequently shown after excited warnings about their violent and uncontrolled behavior. Hiram and Barney Davis, “The Wild Men of Borneo,” who first appeared in the 1850s had long careers on stages throughout the United States. Other acts, like “The Last of the Ancient Aztecs of Mexico” that began touring the country in 1849, were presented accompanied by sensationalized stories of daring adventure and murdered explorers. Riding on the wave of interest in the Meso-American archeology roused by Stephen’s discoveries, the two boys who were said to comprise the last of the ancient Aztecs became immensely popular. At the height of their

fame they were received by the House of Representatives, the Senate, and President Fillmore.<sup>51</sup>

Ethnographic shows featuring the “semi-civilized” peoples of the Near East or Asia more subtly evoked illicit possibilities. This nuanced approach resulted from the fact that the stereotypes of these peoples depicted them as perverse and sensual rather than bestial. At the same time “Orientals” were not so culturally familiar as Europeans. The sins of the latter were a sign of weakened character rather than some absolute racial difference. Perhaps observers were titillated by representation of the “Oriental” in ways they were not by those of different peoples because this Other lay somewhere between the wild man and the European. The semi-civilized “Orientals” were exotic enough that audiences could project their secret desires upon them, yet not so familiar as to cause the viewer to suspect his or her own virtue.

Of all the “Orientalist” acts on the mid-nineteenth century stage, none were as popular as Chang and Eng Bunker, the so-called “Siamese Twins.” The variety of ways in which the Bunker boys were displayed during the 40 plus year span of their career is a good example of the complexity of the “Oriental” image. When they first appeared in 1829 the lingering highbrow admiration for Chinese cultural sophistication made the intimate, refined, parlor setting in which they appeared appropriate to the self-congratulatory pretensions of their audience. At the same time, they were also displayed in popular cultural venues of the tents, music halls, and dime-museums. There they were celebrated as “natural curiosities” and innocent boys. They soon began performing acts of acrobatics, comedy, and minstrelsy. Here their depiction as oddities, dependent children, and natural entertainers convinced apprehensive but paternalistic audiences of

their own racial superiority. The more lurid possibilities of their exoticism did not become a component of the “Siamese Twins” act until more than a decade had passed. When they retired from the stage in 1840 the two acquired a plantation in North Carolina, became slaveholders, married the daughters of a local white farmer, and eventually fathered twenty-two children. It was these titillating facts that became the core of their popularity when they returned to performing in the 1850s. Taylor would later refer to the twins as he struggled to come to some reconciliation with the place of physical desire within his idea of what it meant to be a human.<sup>52</sup>

### **Sensational Substitutes**

In both popular print and live performance a link was fostered in the public’s imagination between the satisfaction of illicit impulses and the foreign Other. The rise of the culture industry facilitated, as we have seen, the spread of bourgeois values related to liberal individualism, civility, sentiment, romantic aspiration, and nationalism. Yet the growth of print and proliferation of public entertainment fostered contrapuntal trends, such as the celebration of gratification, which complicated the dominant understanding of these earlier values. While print and live entertainment offered the possibility of indulging illicit pleasure they also provided a means to contain the subversive potential of these impulses. During this period the representation of foreign Other emerged as a primary means to vent emerging frustrations felt by Americans increasingly divided by their impulse to gratify desires and abide by the values of restraint.

The explosion of popular print and entertainment in the 1820s and 1830s had ushered in an era of garish journalistic, literary and theatrical preoccupation with violence, sexuality, material excesses, and hypocrisy. The emergence of what has

become known as the sensationalist style began in the same technological advances that had dramatically reduced the price of newspapers and sped the popularization of magazines, chapbooks, pamphlet novels, and reformist tracts. A flood of lurid fiction aimed at working and middle-class Americans followed the revolution in print production. Locked into fierce competition with rivals, publishers and new penny papers like Bennett's Herald sought to attract audiences with seamy stories. The life of excesses of the rich and famous, as Bennett's coverage of the Brevoort ball illustrates, was a favorite topic of sensationalist and semi-respectable literature. The success of this voyeuristic style rested on the way it enflamed reader's anger but also their secret envy for the lives of the privileged few. Bennett's Herald and the New York Mirror, in particular, delighted their readership with gossip of the city's well-to-do. Public fascination, and perhaps envy, of the lives of the wealthy sold papers. It was during these decades that the press discovered that stories describing the lives of the rich were popular. Taylor mocked these developments even as he participated in them. As the desperate publishers of a new magazine in Taylor's John Godfrey's Fortune explained, if ever they needed to pump-up the circulation they had only to writing about the private lives of the rich and famous.<sup>53</sup>

Bennett and others also depicted the darker side of contemporary life. Indeed it was with the depiction of the seamy world of antebellum cities that the sensationalist style found its home. Sensational newspapers, magazines like the Police Gazette, and books with similar focus churned-out violent and sexual imagery that readers. David Reynolds estimates that this literature comprised more than 55 percent of all the volumes published in the 1840s, a dramatic shift, he points out, when one considers that such

writing constituted only 20 percent of the works published in 1800. By the time Taylor finished school in 1841 sensationalism could be seen in nearly every avenue of American popular culture, and its effect was, as Edger Allen Poe said, “probably beyond all calculation.”<sup>54</sup>

In his youth Taylor imbibed his share of sensationalist writings. Our knowledge of Taylor’s reading of popular pulp fiction is limited by his self-conscious attempt to control public perception of him as a man of genteel respectability and romantic seriousness. He and his literary executors’ made careful efforts to edit away signs of what Taylor termed “questionable taste” in his letters, diaries and private papers. Nevertheless, evidence of less genteel reading habits survived. Chap books like Endless Entertainment, or Comic, Terrific, and Legendary Tales steeped Taylor in the lore of fantastic tales as a child. Later, he read Charles Brockden Brown’s Wieland and Edgar Huntly and was introduced to the gothic themes that presaged the rise of sensationalism. Though we cannot know precisely when he read George Lippard, one of the era’s most successful sensationalist writers, he was certainly familiar with him by the early 1850s. Taylor’s youthful image of the city seemed informed by Lippard’s novels of crime, social conflict, sexual seduction, and grotesque violence. Lippard too transferred the dark themes of the gothic novel and the exposé of Eugene Sue’s Mysteries of Paris to the American city. What we can be certain of is that shocking stories of murder and infidelity made their way into Taylor’s hands in the form of newspapers, magazines, and cheap yellow papered novels like the Progress of Mr. Lambkin in Pursuit of Pleasure and Amusement.<sup>55</sup>

Reformist tracts were another and highly important avenue that introduced readers, including Taylor, to the lurid sensationalist style. These tracts often graphically tackled issues of masturbation, infidelity, slavery, and temperance in a fashion similar to much of the pulp fiction written by men like Lippard. Born among the reform-minded Quakers of West Chester county Taylor was exposed in the early 1840s to heated reformist discourse by visiting speakers. At sixteen Taylor wrote his own temperance tale, the gist of which contained the standard motifs of the genre: the pious long suffering wife, the brutal drunken father, and the vulnerable child.<sup>56</sup>

Sensationalist literature stockpiled Taylor's imagination with a repertoire of sensationalist figures and motifs that would reappear in his later fiction. Naming but a few, we could point to the deceived country girl/seamstress who is trapped into becoming a prostitute in John Godfrey's Fortune; the noble-hearted rogue "Sandy Flash" in The Story of Kennett; the devious, weak-willed reformer who attempts to corrupt the heroine of Hannah Thurston; the unscrupulous speculator in Joseph and His Friend; and that culprit's daughter, a winsome, drug popping, and social climbing femme fatale.<sup>57</sup> The existence of these motifs in Taylor's later writing should remind us that the wholesome genteel image of him passed-down to us by other scholars, often in an attempt to establish him as a straw man in their attack on the shallow genteel tradition, ignores the complex influences at work on allegedly "genteel" writers. If Taylor's desire for the autographs of men like John Quincy Adams and Charles Dickens tells us something about his conventionality, then his interest the signature of writers like Edgar Allen Poe suggest something else.<sup>58</sup>

In what stands as a testament to the pervasiveness of this literature, Taylor managed in Quaker dominated West Chester to come into contact with some of the most lurid pulp fiction novels of the period. Reading Laughton Osborn's The Confessions of a Poet in 1842, a book David Reynolds describes as "perhaps the darkest American novel written before Melville's Pierre," Taylor acquired unforgettable images of a poet's life at a moment when he was making the decision to become one. As Reynolds summarized, the story "features two illicit live-in romances, a murder, a vividly described nightmare, and the horrid decapitation of a rotting corpse—all related by a crazed poet shortly before he shoots himself."<sup>59</sup> Although Taylor considered the book "monstrous," its effects can be seen in John Godfrey's Fortune, Taylor's autobiographical tale about a naïve poet's descent into drunken debauchery.<sup>60</sup>

The combination of disgust and pleasure that Taylor felt reading sensationalist writing mirrored the paradox between values and behavior that became a point of embarrassment and introspection for middle-class Americans. It turns out that many loved their most hated sins. The uncomfortable fact was that the hordes of urban prostitutes existed because of the rise of demand.<sup>61</sup> As Walt Whitman noted in 1857, "19 out of 20" men in New York City "are more or less familiar with houses of prostitution and are customers to them." Among "the best classes of Men the custom is to go among prostitutes as an ordinary thing." "Nothing," he went on to say, "is thought of it—or rather the wonder is, how can there be any 'fun' without it."<sup>62</sup> As appalled as many professed to be by gambling establishments, spirit shops and houses of prostitution, each thrived in no small measure thanks to the patronage of the middle class. Even as republican ideologues and disapproving ministers tersely admonished the grosser pursuit

of self-interest, ruthlessly enterprising men like John Jacob Astor received increasing admiration and reformers used the sensationalism to sell their books. No matter how popular moralists bellowed against the demon of conspicuous consumption, the material trappings of success became the increasingly favored measure of social prestige.

Whether in the form of elite tastes for extravagance or the thrilling passions of the street, the broad changes taking place in the socio-economic realities of the lives of many Americans instilled new, and by the standards of older norms, often illicit desires.

One part of the appeal of sensationalist writing was the way it embraced the illicit freedom rather than attempted to repair faith in older ideals that were expected to hold the darker possibilities of the market and the new city in check.<sup>63</sup> Taylor, like other readers of sensationalist literature, found himself drawn inextricably towards this emerging discourse on license, decadence, and excesses because of the way it reflected the extremities of the culture evolving around him. Soon after arriving in New York Taylor gravitated into the circle of self-styled “bohemians” centered at Charles Ignatius Pfaff’s seedy, smoke filled, below ground tavern. Known to its frequent customers as “the Cave” the tavern was located at 689 Broadway near what was then the theater and literary district along Bleeker. Taylor found comradeship among an eclectic group that at various times included Willis, Walt Whitman, and sensationalistic writers Fitz-James O’Brien, Charles D. Gardette, and Fitz-Hugh Ludlow. Men like drama critic William Winter, picturesque poet N. G. Shepherd, and radical reformer Henry Clapp, Jr. imparted a seriousness to the establishment that only the presence of more jovial spirits like that of Artemus Ward managed to balance. Rounding-out the crowd and giving it an erotic tinge were the scandal ridden melodramatic actresses Ada Clare and Adah Isaacs Menken.<sup>64</sup>

Years later Taylor drew a vivid if sometimes cutting satire of this group in John Godfrey's Fortune. "Classical subjects are dead—obsolete—antediluvian!" cried the obvious Whitman avatar at one point in the novel.

Take the fireman, in his red flannel shirt, with the sleeves rolled up to his shoulders,--the clam-fisher, bare-legged on the sea-shore,--the woodchopper,--the street-sweeper: where will you find anything more heroic? [...] It's the Highest [art] sir! Form and Action, in their grand primitive sublimity! [...] Life's the thing! A strong-backed'long-shore-man, with his hairy and sun burnt arms, and the tobacco-juice in the corners of his mouth, is worth all your saints!<sup>65</sup>

Despite the parody, Taylor's sketch of his companions at Pfaff's revealed what drew him to the circle. As a group they shared irreverence born of disillusionment for the hypocrisies of bourgeois Americans. Most of all they were willing to consider alternative perspectives to traditional norms. In their company Taylor was living a life of debauchery like that depicted in Confessions of a Poet. In short, Taylor drew strength from their companionship as he explored the crumbling edges of antebellum culture and the moral universe of his childhood.<sup>66</sup>

It is equally important to note that Taylor's literary depiction of this group, as his caricature of Whitman suggests, was laced with a hint of venom. Godfrey's long-term fortunes dipped when he entered the circle. The life they pursued left him floating free of the moral foundations that had held him firmly on the course of gradual, if unreflective, success. While they are not strictly to blame for his decline, when combined with Godfrey's sensitivity and lack of worldly experience, the moral ambiguities that the free-spirits of "the Cave" led him to embrace left him unable to regulate his habits, unable to reconcile his idealism with self-interested aims that seemed practical, necessary, and even desirable. Taylor felt this danger himself. The new temptations of the life in New York threatened his identity of genteel self-restraint and romantic artist. For instance, Taylor

clearly felt trapped by the obligations and lack of fulfillment that had arisen around his relationship with Mary Agnew. As the years passed his frustrations mounted and he was eventually left unfulfilled by her death. The sentimental rewards evaporated leaving a sense of betrayal and personal confusion. Years later Taylor expressed these feelings in his novel, as he describes the crushing deceit experienced by Godfrey at the hands of the first woman he loved. Godfrey's subsequent drift into moral corruption represented Taylor's fears at the time: anxiety about where the new element of cynicism and permissiveness in his life might eventually lead him.

Of course few Americans shared Taylor's experience of life amid the Bohemian underworld of antebellum New York City, though many knew of that world and few remained unaffected by sensationalism. Nevertheless most were sensitive to the moral ambiguities that surrounded this subculture. They felt the tension between imperatives of character and opportunities or necessities that they confronted on a daily basis. For them sensationalism offered a chance for catharsis. It also explained the growing interest in the exotic. In the foreign, the sensationalist culture found a fertile venue for the exploration of illicit desire where sexual and violent impulses could be fulfilled. The innovative writer and magazine publisher Maturin Murray Ballou fed audiences a heavy diet of sensationalist travel related literature. This opportunistic son from a family of Universalist clergymen was the author of more than forty adventure novels and travel narratives like Fanny Campbell; or, The Female Pirate Captain (an 1844 work that sold 80,000 copies in the first month of publication), and creator of numerous widely read middle-class magazines like the before mentioned Gleason's Pictorial that published images of Barnum's Iranistan, and Ballou's Dollar Monthly (1855-1863). Ballou

specialized in producing a milder version of the sensational pulp-fiction that captivated contemporary readers. Like many of his less restrained counterparts, however, his writing made extensive use of exotic settings: South Sea romances, whaling voyages, desert adventures, naval expeditions, and jungle exploration. The stories included a host of exotic figures like “half-breed” pirates, dusky Bedouin nomads, bloodthirsty black warriors, depraved merchant mariners, despotic captains, mercenary soldiers, and ravenous cannibals, among others. But they also explored the enticements of innocent island nymphs, Circassian beauties, naked African girls, and mysterious women of the harem.<sup>67</sup>

Building on the popular success of exotic fantasy, missionary accounts, American naval expeditions, adventure travel narratives, and archaeological surveys, the sensationalist travel writing emphasized the racy, exhilarating possibilities that existed in this diverse literature. Following English works like Edward Trelawny’s Adventures of a Younger Son (1831) sensationalist authors used exotic settings to indulge violent impulses. The same settings offered an opportunity for the expression of pent-up sexual desires. The titillating subject of harem adventure, for instance, was popularized by another English author, James Mouer, in his widely read The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan (1824) and widely exploited in American sensational fiction. Mass market penny press writers like Ballou exploited the trend in suggestive novels like The Turkish Slave: The Mohametan and his Harem (1850) and The Circassian Slave; or, The Sultan’s Favorite: A Story of Constantinople and the East (1851). His eroticized depictions of the sensual, carefree, and submissive harem girls were typical of the Oriental sexual fantasies one finds in American magazines and books of the day.<sup>68</sup>

In many of these tales, the longings fostered by contemporary society were transformed into both sexual exploitation and aggression against the foreign Other. As a settler colony deeply steeped in the violence of dispossessing the indigenous peoples and “taming” the wilderness, America produced a society accustomed to violence. In the decades discussed here the prevalence for violent imagery was reinforced by the growing importance of the competitive, even combative, language of the marketplace. To these must also be added the social tensions surrounding urban development and the needs of expansionist politics described earlier. Sensational fiction with international themes was rife with a violent imagery of conquest.

While the violence of conquest was often transparently direct, it is also true that sexual desire was transfigured into violence. Perhaps that was because American culture had evolved a far greater acceptance for aggression than sexual desire. The new but still illicit possibilities for sexual gratification, in short, found an outlet in the aggressive discourse aimed at the foreign Other. Much of the language of exploration, trade, cultural interaction, and conquest was gendered. The foreign lands and peoples were described in emasculating terms as weak, vulnerable, and impotent. Instead both were feminized. Foreign peoples were depicted, among other ways, as submissive and promiscuous in the way they wasted the land. Commonly anthropomorphized as “virginal” and “naked,” foreign lands were enticing and seductive in their alluring fertility. Visitation, in short, was charged with powers of male potency. While the resulting sexualized subtext appears fairly straight-forward to contemporary readers, in the mid-nineteenth century the connotations were obscured by the gender ideology of the

day. Nonetheless readers were readily attuned to and evidently eager for the way travel texts satisfied their desires.

An example of the way in which these two passions were intertwined can be seen in the fascination during the 1840s and 1850s with the Pacific Islands. On June 11, 1842 the flagship of the United States Exploring Expedition the U. S. S. Vincennes arrived in New York harbor. Four years had passed since the vessels had set sail to explore, among other places, the islands of the South Pacific. An abbreviated version of Commander Wilkes' official report appeared soon after. Contradictory legends of the South Seas had emerged in the previous years. Some stories described the islands as a sensual paradise populated by friendly natives and beautiful promiscuous women. They were also thought to be the home of bloodthirsty primitives, savages who engaged in such unimaginable horrors as cannibalism. Wilkes' account did little to discredit either legend. Readers were told that missionaries had lessened the sinful habits and violent propensities of the inhabitants, yet much remained to be corrected. The only real violence that the readers experienced, however, came from the visitors. Following the capture of a Fijian leader named Vendovi, accused of killing ten American sailors several years before, native retaliation "compelled" the commander to destroy two villages and kill eighty natives.<sup>69</sup>

The expeditions fanned public interest in the region. Capitalizing on events, P. T. Barnum presented what he called the "Feejee Mermaid" to the delight of New York audiences. Barnum's Mermaid tapped both legends. Her sharpened teeth and dark shriveled flesh gave the creature a terrifying appearance. Yet her name conjured a very different image. Advertisements depicted the alluring aquatic women of seaman lore. Posters showed the Mermaid surfacing from the water like Venus clothed only by a pair

of small discreetly placed shells. Americans loved it. In time the Mermaid became a prized display at Barnum's American Museum until the museum burned some years later.<sup>70</sup>

A succession of navy men, whalers, merchants, and missionaries amplified the region's fame transforming legend into fact. The merchant seaman William Torrey held audiences in suspense with his tale of two years captivity among the peoples of the Marquesas Islands. James Oliver's popular book the Wreck of the Glide described the beauty of the native peoples and recounted the thrilling story of survival among them. Perhaps the most popular accounts were written by Herman Melville. His travel account/novels Typee and Omoo gave Melville his first reputation as a writer. Elsewhere, hoping to emulate Barnum's success, one showman thought to display the unfortunate Vendovi the Fijian chief brought back by the expedition. When he died an actor was quickly found to masquerade as the chief and the "Cannibal Chief from Fiji" was still a regular in New York theaters when Taylor lived there in the late 1840s.<sup>71</sup>

### **Transgression and Travel**

The radical possibilities associated with travel narratives played a significant role in the development of the sensationalist style. Sensationalism had gained inspiration from the sometimes freakish revelations of eighteenth-century discovery accounts, the bawdy, picaresque imbroglios of Grand Tour swells, the harrowing experience of captivity narratives, the thrilling accounts of frontier exploration and sea voyages, and the shocking stories brought back by missionaries. In return the exaggerated language and emphasis upon effect common to sensationalist writings spiced travel narratives. For instance, just as temperance and anti-slavery tracts employed sensationalist techniques, so

too did some missionary accounts. Works like Mary Davis Wallis' Life in Feejee sought to generate interest in the missionary programs among a public accustomed to sensationalist novels by insuring that the story she told was "strange, stranger than fiction." She shocked readers with graphic descriptions of cannibals roasting men alive.<sup>72</sup>

The influence of sensationalist writing can be seen throughout Taylor's travel writing. For all of the refined sensibility and didacticism woven into Taylor's travel texts, opening his books readers entered a world fringed by erotic and violent possibilities. In many of them Taylor seems as intent at times to explore his own errant emotions as he does to sublimate them. As readers traveled with Taylor through the wilds of California, lawless roads of Mexico, primeval surroundings of Africa, and treacherous interiors of India and China they vicariously entered ungoverned worlds where sexual escapades might be had at anytime and violence lay just around the corner. Native women seemed to strut provocatively through his narratives, unprotected by the sorts of social guards that his Victorian reader expected. The places he visited, as he said of a road in Mexico, were "an excellent place for robbers to lie in wait;" they were the kind of locations that prompted thoughts like, "I had better load my pistol."<sup>73</sup> His writings, in short, titillated and inspired fear. His work invited audiences to indulge vicariously in fantasies of sexual gratification and aggression.

Sensationalist elements are present in Taylor's first great successes, Views A-Foot and even more so in Eldorado. At times both surround readers with a heady sense of unencumbered freedom from the restraints of normal life and uneasiness about the traveler's well being that establishes a subtly edgy emotional tone. In the midst of this

Taylor scatters sensationalistic vignettes that exploit the sense of freedom and uncertainty to invite his readers into fantasies of lurid flights of horror and prurience.

The language describing the “swarming,” “dissolute” London streets in Views seems inspired by the mysteries of the city genre and intended to stir both revulsion and curiosity in readers. In Frankfort Taylor described the frenzied scene of a fire and the heroic rescue of a suicide. He invoked the Gothic in a tangled Northern German forest haunted by a legendary specter and surrounded by fearsome crags. Nearby at a “ghostly, dark and echoing castle of an inn (the Black Eagle)” —suited, he wrote, to be a scene of “robbery or crime” —his fears were aroused by creepy owners, the suspicious sounds of lurking people outside his room, and what he takes to be a bloody pillow in the “sleeping chamber.”<sup>74</sup>

Sensationalistic elements appeared more frequently in Taylor’s writings of his travels through California and Mexico. The young man’s eagerness for the intensity of “savage” experience is evident throughout. His letters are spiced with the shocking descriptions of the sordid debauchery of the Gold Rush cities. The wilderness had its own dark features. “The black mountains” echoed with “the incessant yell of a thousand wolves.” In valleys that sometimes resembled “caverns of the damned” lurked desperados, savage Indians, and grizzly bears.<sup>75</sup>

Despite his own thirst for colorful experience, Taylor’s descriptions were influenced as well by his sensitivity to the blood-pumping tastes of popular audiences. He counseled Mary not to “be frightened at what I may say of Indians, grizzly bears, and the like.” In truth, he continued, “the greatest thing to be feared in this country is the fleas.” We are left to conclude that at least some of the time Taylor’s reports were

embellished because he knew that his audiences wanted exciting fare.<sup>76</sup> It was for their benefit he lingered over a gruesome scene of cannibalism: “There is no creation in the whole range of fiction,” he wrote of a man who survived a winter on human flesh, “so dark and awful in its character as this man.” There was a breathless narration of an immense fire, the escape of a man in the disguise of a woman, and the ludicrous pathos of people digging-up streets in the search for gold.<sup>77</sup> There was no illusion, or so it seemed, in the immediacy of the fear, aggression, greed, and lust that percolated unacknowledged below the message of progress in Eldorado. They were emotions very much a part of a world in which at least some of his readers felt they lived: a world governed by the pursuit of sensual gratification rather than ideals.

Like some of his readers Taylor felt surrounded by desires which he was compelled to resist. His frustration had led to a longing for the release of passion, and an appreciation for the concreteness of sensual pleasure. In California he found an antidote. As he wrote while out West, Taylor “began to think that the fable of Aladdin” offered nothing more fantastic than what he saw in California. “The genie,” he said, “had come to many whom I saw.”<sup>78</sup> He had “spent five months in the midst of the rough, half-savage life of a new country” living “entirely in the open air, sleeping on the ground with my saddle for a pillow, and sharing the hardships of the gold-diggers” and it had done him wonders.<sup>79</sup> His adventures had left him with “lusty health, complexion, and appetite of a teamster.” He returned “fat, brown, and rough as a mountaineer, heavier by fifteen pounds than I ever was before, and with the rugged feeling of health and strength I have so long coveted.”<sup>80</sup> At the root of it all he confided was that the “fiery part of my nature has had full play and free expression in the excitement of my recent travel, and goads me

no longer.”<sup>81</sup> The experience, he predicted, had “fitted” him “for three years’ engagement in New York, without grumbling.”<sup>82</sup>

The feelings Taylor described upon his return were the sort of revitalization many longed to experience for themselves. Readers of his books and consumers of exotic entertainments wished for catharsis that would lift the sense of emotional and physical frustration they felt. Unfortunately the satisfaction was ephemeral.

In this instance, as in others like it, Taylor’s assessment proved optimistic. Whenever he returned to the restraints of everyday life inevitably the old feelings returned. Once behind his desk at the Tribune following his California trip he soon began again with the familiar complaints. Back in “civilization” he felt compelled to seek distinction through his art. Instead he had to grind-out a living. The “City Items, California News, Cuban Expeditions, and a host of such trash” were keeping him maddeningly busy. The wildness that he enjoyed abroad suddenly repulsed him. “A police report or something equally disgusting will be thrust under my nose the next min. for my special attention and contemplation.”<sup>83</sup> The prosaic reality of his life sickened him. “I am hurried on all sides,” he wrote in July, and by April the next year claimed to be “utterly dispirited and disgusted with [life and work].”<sup>84</sup>

Some of Taylor’s dissatisfaction flowed from problems with which we are familiar: his annoyance with the tedium of his job, further spurred by frustrated desire. But it was also in late 1850s that the health of Taylor’s sickly fiancé Mary Agnew began to decline. Mary’s health had been a worry to Taylor for some years. Hoping for a recovery they had continually delayed their marriage. By the summer of 1850 her condition had grown so grave that Taylor had moved her to a resort at West Point and

then to a country home near Willis' estate. With Mary back at Kennett Square in November Taylor wrote that the "constant anxiety of mind has at last begun to affect my health. Since last May I have gone through more than I supposed it possible for me to bear, and it will be some time before I can recover from the effects of it."<sup>85</sup> She died in late December and was buried amid "a cruel storm."<sup>86</sup> After her death Taylor's letters complain of nagging physical troubles and exhaustion. The combined sense of grief and frustration prompted renewed longings to escape. Only "a change of scene and a relief from my business duties here" would help his deteriorating health, he wrote to a friend.<sup>87</sup> "I can't work with any spirit; another such winter will kill me, I am certain," he warned another. What he wanted more than ever was to set the wild and sensual part of himself free; to give full reign the savage emotions he felt. By March of 1851 he was sure "I shall leave next fall on a journey somewhere—no matter where."<sup>88</sup>

The psychic state described here sheds a different light on the story of Taylor's journey around the world. The need for catharsis pushed Taylor towards even more extreme experience. In early 1851 Taylor already knew exactly where, or at least the direction, he wanted to go. A year and half before, during his trip to California Taylor had strained to transform the experience there into something like what he expected to have in the Orient. What he saw out west was, Taylor tried to convince his friend George Boker, "more marvelous than the 'Arabian Nights.'"<sup>89</sup> "The wild of California rose," he wrote to Mary, "is sweeter than the Oriental."<sup>90</sup> Yet despite the evident sentimentalism of these statements, Taylor seemed prepared to take the sensual dimensions of the dangers and pleasures of the East more literally than writers with a more genteel or poetic sensibility. If a journey Eastward into Africa, the Near East, and Asia would, Taylor

thought, take him back along the course of history and civilization then it would also bring him closer in a literal as much as poetic sense to his own “native” emotions. In so doing he was convinced that “A winter in the Orient will restore my health.”<sup>91</sup> While the trip “appealed to his imagination,” his interest was more primal: as he wrote in the preface of Journey to Central Africa he was attracted to the Orient by a literal “desire to participate in their free, vigorous, semi-barbaric life.”<sup>92</sup> He did not intend to write an idealized account of the lands he visited but one devoted to the “living races which inhabit those countries” in all their wild and uncivilized nature. Whenever he could in the course of the following journey Taylor fled the “civilized” cities of the countries he visited for the hinterlands with the hope of finding a world unrestrained by the absurd decorum of civilized life and the tragic alienation from the senses that came with it. The sentimental significance of the Orient did not disappear for him but his imagination luxuriated in the idea that his travels were working a slow but very tangible transformation in him, making him by degrees literally like the people he saw about him. Writing a friend before setting-off for India, China, and Japan he joked about the transformation he would experience before returning home.

If I get through this second trip as successfully as the first, I shall come to you burdened with Gibraltar and the Alhambra, with the rivers and jungles of India, the Himalayas and the pagodas of Delhi and Benares, the “summer isles of Eden” of the eastern archipelago and the wonders of the Central Flowery Land, in addition to the conquest of Japan. I shall be able to strangle like a Thug, or run amuck like a Malay; I shall be as expert in disemboweling as the chief executioner of Japan; I shall yearn for my missing bird’s-nest soup and puppy-pie,--Heaven knows what I shall not be capable of. A man can’t pass through so much and be the same he was originally [...]<sup>93</sup>

Amid the jokes was the pleasure of the release of darker possibilities in the idea of becoming “a Thug,” an “expert disemboweler,” or simply running “amuck.” An

ambiance of fear, horror, and irrationality of a type rooted in the Gothic rather than Sublime, appeared with some frequency in his coming travel writing. The wasted landscape of Egypt—dotted with ruins, honeycombed with tombs and rocky valleys ominously littered with bones—provided a setting to tell stories that cause the “hairs of [one’s] beard to [stand] straight out from” the face.<sup>94</sup> In the wilds of Africa when surrounded by parties of “savages,” in Turkey under the eyes of bandits, deep in the lion infested jungles of India, and in China amid the menacing presence of the Taiping rebels, Taylor let float the fear that death might be near at hand.<sup>95</sup> The “rancid” cities of China with their inscrutable but malevolent hordes and macabre scenes of torture and beheading, were presented in a tone of horrified revulsion common to anti-Chinese exposés of life among California’s newest immigrants. At times Taylor depicts himself overcome by bouts of a dark but giddy irrationality, as when he described in gleeful horror a “conflagration” he impishly sets along the shore of the Nile.

At length I reached an open patch of grass four or five feet in height, and so dry and yellow that it snapped like glass under my feet. It was dotted with clumps of high shrubs, knotted all over with wild, flowering vines[.] [...] There was a strong smell of lions about the place[.] [...] The wind was blowing towards the river, and as I stood in the midst, contemplating the wild, lawless grouping of the different trees and shrubs some imp of darkness whispered in my ear "What a magnificent conflagration this would make! and then, perhaps, you might have the satisfaction of burning out a brace of lions! "Without more ado, I whipped out a box of matches, and struck fire in one of the thickest tufts. The effect was instantaneous, and so was my repentance. There was a crack and a crash, like the explosion of powder, and a sheet of red flame leaped into the air. In a few seconds it had spread to a broad swath of fire, rolling rapidly before the wind, and leaving the earth behind it as bare as the palm of my hand. The rank grass roared and snapped as the terrible power I had so thoughtlessly awakened, licked it away; and not the grass alone. It seized on the vines and tore them down, swung itself by them into the boughs of the trees, and found richer aliment in their gums and juices. It spread on both sides and against the wind, and soon the long spires of scarlet flame, twisting in the air, rose high and hot above the dome like tops of the mimosa forests. Before we left the place, the volumes of smoke reached nearly to the other side of the Nile. As I heard its relentless feet trampling down

the thickets, I tormented myself with pictures of the evil which I had perhaps originated. I fancied it spreading from day to day, lapping the woods in coils of flame and flinging their burning boughs from island to island, till of all the glory of vegetation which had filled me with such rapture, there was nothing but a few charred trunks standing in beds of ashes. I saw the natives with their flocks and herds flying before it; the wild beasts leaping into the flood for refuge from its red fangs, and half that glorious region given up to terror and desolation.<sup>96</sup>

The most lurid of these scenes was an occasion when he indulged in hasheesh.

Well known to Taylor, the parallels between drug-induced hallucinations and travel to the exotic East was a romantic motif made famous by De Quency's Opium Eater. Examples of drug induced phantasmagoria and the horror of delirium tremors had, however, become a feature of American sensationalist fiction like The Hashish Eater by Taylor's compatriot at Pfaff's, Fitz-Hugh Ludlow. Taylor's own descriptions of his experiments with hasheesh became, based on the frequency they are mentioned by his fans, some of the most memorable episodes of his writings. Gothic imagery dominated his hallucinations. The drug plunged him into a "picture of animal terror and agony" in which he imagined that "the flesh had fallen from my bones" leaving a "skeleton head that I carried on my shoulders!" and in the hopes of relieving himself from "the horror" of the delusion moved him to within inches of suicide.<sup>97</sup>

Taylor's fascination with terror overlapped with a broader need to indulge extravagant sensual experiences. His desire to try hasheesh originated with his hope to experience, like the "luxurious Syrian," "dreams more alluring and more gorgeous than the Chinese extracts from his darling opium pipe." In his first try at the drug he was engulfed in peals of irrational, almost insane laughter.<sup>98</sup> Before his transfiguration into a skeleton on his second attempt, Taylor gasped as the "the sense of limitation—of the confinement of our senses within the bounds of our own flesh and blood—instantly fell

away.” In a state of “mental exaltation” the physical and spiritual world revealed “itself in a succession of splendid metaphors” of gorgeous colors and wonderful imagination that stunned the senses.<sup>99</sup>

Then in the middle sections of his Land of the Saracen Taylor paused to discourse on the subject of some of the other of the East’s sensual pleasures: smoking a hookah, drinking coffee, and the pleasures of a Turkish bath. Next to his experience with hasheesh, Taylor’s accounts of the Turkish bath became his most famed incidents of sensual indulgence. In the latter the lines between types of sensual experiences blurred. The florid language of his chapter on “Bathing and Bodies” verged upon the erotic. Lying in “our primitive form” upon the heated marble of a Damascus bathhouse smoking pipes, being “massaged” and “polished” by “dark-eyed boys” whose bodies he admired, Taylor indulged in a steamy eroticism. During the session his skin attained “an exquisite sensibility” that provoked “thrills of the purist physical pleasure.”<sup>100</sup> As he described the scene the position of power alternated between him and the Arab servers in a way that suggested an erotic play between submission and domination. At one point Taylor described himself as “clay” in the hands of the masseuse; in another the Arab boys kneel pliant before him.

The homoeroticism of this scene was balanced by his lurid descriptions of “lascivious” Arab dancing girls.<sup>101</sup> As we have seen Taylor described the movement of the dancers using animal metaphor and with intricate heart pumping detail.<sup>102</sup> Elsewhere he showed a voyeuristic pleasure in gazing upon the dark skinned bodies of native women—from the bare-breasted African girls to loosely clothed maidens of India—and telling titillating stories that offer a glimpse into the life of the harem.

In addition to all these sensationalist descriptions Taylor used the allegorical implications of travel to imply a metaphoric fulfillment of primal desires. The innuendo surrounding sensationalist motifs combined with the broader suggestive powers of narrative to fashion extended metaphors aimed at the satisfaction of illicit desire; the traveler's physical journey through foreign landscapes and encounter with people signified acts of aggression and sexual gratification. Like the other allegorical modes evident in Taylor's writing, it emerged from an established tradition in fictional and non-fictional narratives.

The obvious assertion of imperial privilege over defenseless peoples was but one of the less subtle expressions of aggressive impulses. As part of Perry's crew in the voyage to open Japan, Taylor was placed in charge of a search party that explored the island of Loochoo, modern day Okinawa. He described with pleasure the inability of the local people to prevent his party from walking wherever they wanted. Invading the homes of native peoples, Taylor seemed fully aware of the violation he was committing. "I must confess," he told audiences, "that the thirst for exploration made us somewhat ~~merciless~~ unfeeling." He freely entered homes uninvited. "On my appearance, which must have been very unexpected and startling," he wrote of one instance, "the women fell on their knees, uplifting both hands in an attitude of supplication, while the men prostrated themselves and stuck their foreheads upon the earth."<sup>103</sup> His complete indifference to the rights of the people characterized the implied aggression of exploration. Other places in his writings the power dynamic also became manifest in the frequently unequal commercial relationship between himself and native peoples who acted as his servants, guides, porters, and entertainment.

Finally, in a similar but subtle fashion the implied mastery of land and people in picturesque and panoramic aesthetics were expressive of the more figurative fulfillment of outwardly directed aggressive impulses that travel discourse was capable of providing. If, as discussed earlier, the sightseeing visitor exerts a form of figurative possession over the seen, then hidden within the voyeuristic privilege were aggressive impulses that the act of travel made manifest.

In keeping with the eroticization of the Other common to the day Taylor's description of foreign landscape and native bodies was suggestive of sexual impulses as well. His depiction of physical travel frequently constituted a figurative gratification of sexual passions. Often a language of penetration and possession was used to describe the act of travel into foreign countries. "There are few spots on the Earth's surface," he said upon visiting the island of LooChoo, "into which the European race has not penetrated."<sup>104</sup> Taylor described his reconnaissance of the island as "penetration" and his encroachment on the people who lived there as "violation." The language was suggestive of sexual as well as military domination. Of course, unequal economic relationships had erotic potential as well. Taylor's bath house experience, or the multitude of popular examples of exotic theater, were in their own right forms of metonymic displacement. As discussed previously, the erotic allegorical implications of travel were often emphasized in the feminization of landscape itself. LooChoo was "a piece of virgin earth" much like the frontier of the United States. If Taylor's travel writings were commonplace in their use of such devices, many of his readers were engaged in something far more than a genteel escape to a world of order. In Taylor's narratives, as in other sensationalist travel

literature, individuals entered a sphere of chaos, where anything could happen, and people were free to indulge their aggressions or sexual passions rather than contain them.

Just as the popular sensationalistic travel accounts of Melville and others influenced Taylor's writing, the success of his own work influenced a generation of authors eager to plumb Americans' taste for the scintillating possibilities of exotic adventure. The synergy between sensationalism and popular travel literature in the mid-nineteenth-century was perhaps best captured in the writings of Baltimore born physician, and later colleague of Taylor's at the Tribune, John Williamson Palmer. During the 1850s in stories that appeared in magazines like Putnam's Monthly, Atlantic Monthly, and Century Magazine, and books by the sensationalist middlebrow press of Rudd & Carleton in New York, Palmer self-consciously patterned his narrative on the "up-to-anything" persona popularized by Curtis and Taylor. This freebooting figure seemed drawn ever towards the borderlands of Western society.<sup>105</sup>

The inspiration for Palmer's tales came from his experience as the first city physician of San Francisco during the Gold Rush, his later practice in Honolulu, and as a surgeon aboard an East India Company war ship around the time of the Second Burmese War. Palmer's 1856 Burmese adventure book The Golden Dragon (republished under the title Up and Down the Irrawaddi) and his 1859 The New and the Old; or, California and India in Romantic Aspects, extend upon the sensationalistic elements found in Taylor's writings. His irreverent American recounts adventures had upon what appears to have been an aimless lark through the colonial backwaters of empire. Palmer spins tales filled with vigorous action, ghastly violence, sexual innuendo, inflammatory racism, bizarre incidents, and the ridicule of authority.

In California Palmer described the cosmopolitan streets of San Francisco in the lurid style of George Lippard, emphasizing the city's wild "dance-hall" nightlife, the trials of drunken prostitutes, the schemes of confidence men, and ghastly murders. The narrator himself partook of the wildness of the outcasts he described. Broke, the narrator wins the money to begin his medical practice in a card game. He pursues the same sensationalistic style as he leaped across the Pacific. Citing Taylor's advice, the author assumed the fashion of native dress and mocked the rigid self-control of his "Anglo-Saxon" brothers. At the same time, however, he ridiculed the "racially inferior native peoples" with the zeal that would later aid him well in the service of General John C. Breckenridge and the War Department of the Confederacy. All the while he reveled in the cathartic sexual possibilities of half-naked, vulnerable native women that grace the inside cover of the book. Elsewhere he gleefully recounted the violence of the "English massacres" of "hapless" Burmese troops. Palmer's narrator represented, in short, an extreme, but highly popular, version of the sensationalist persona through whose exotic adventures audiences could find cathartic release of their need to indulge, on one hand, the erotic and possessive desires fostered by the emergent consumer culture and, on the other, the violent impulses of frustration and competition created by the marketplace.<sup>106</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Although many bourgeois Americans could not enter fully into Taylor's romantic dreams—his quest for a transcendent ideal, poetic expression, or persona of alienated withdrawal—the majority could relate to his desire to find an outlet for the sexual and violent impulses he felt building inside of him. Like him, many harbored discontent fostered by the gap between the values of personal restraint and the impulse to gratify

illicit desire. Driven by an awareness of the importance of competition yet sensitive of their own impotence, many harbored aggressive impulses. At the same time the growth of cities and markets afforded new opportunities for the indulgence of conspicuous consumption, sensual pleasures, and sexual gratification.

Not only did they find themselves living in a society that ran contrary to many of the values associated with the notion of individual self-control and also of civilization, it was a society that appeared with alarming frequency to encourage and even glorify such questionable conduct: the sort of confusion, in other words, which came from living in a culture that seemed, at least to some segments of middle class and elite society, to be at odds with its own moral codes. The contradiction was inherent in much of the sensationalist culture of the day. While sensationalist literature, entertainment, and reformist tracts described the dark realities of urban life they also dwelled upon the illicit behavior that they appeared to condemn. Indeed, the popularity of sensationalism resulted from the inherent tension between values of the Protestant ethos and the obsession with the lurid impulse of gratification. Fundamentally, sensationalist taste dramatized the illicit possibilities that were beginning to emerge in the market driven, urban society of the day. But they did so in a way that both condemned the corrosiveness of passion while simultaneously satisfying the public's secret longings. They dwelled upon the experience of the very outrages they purported to expose and criticize.

As a result, beneath what appeared to be the personally empowering and comforting sense of collective identity encouraged by racial nationalism and the harmonious social sentiments of middle-class culture, existed a need to find a way to unburden the psyche. In search of an outlet Americans were drawn to the violent and

sexual imagery surrounding the Other. Operating in conjunction with expansionist ideology, the purported savagery of the Other licensed the civilized man's indulgence in his own primal impulses for aggression. More broadly, fantasizing about the Other provided a way for them to vent emerging confusion between the realities and ideals that governed everyday life. In popular culture the foreign peoples and landscapes reflected the longings felt by audiences. Travel was an allegorical substitute for a primal act, thus fulfilling illicit passions.

Yet most could not in fact travel. In its place emerged the variety of sensational depictions in popular entertainment and art described here. In their consumption of them people indulged the illicit desires that swelled their imaginations and troubled their consciences. With the entertainments they attended, novels they read, and decorative items filling their homes, Americans commodified their primal impulses. By purchasing them they were, in effect, indulging their desires. The act of commodifying these desires allowed the consumer to remain at a distance from, and thus untainted by, the illicit impulse for which they were a substitute.

This psychic slight of hand, however, could and easily did break-down. Consumption was still largely frowned upon by republican sentiment. The line between the innocence and recognition of what one was really engaged in—the lurid embrace of pernicious impulses—was paper thin. Indeed the deception was dependent on a willful denial. When the illusion failed the truth raised shocking concerns. Not the least of these concerns was the doubts such false consciousness raised regarding the idea of transparency or sincerity so critical to the ideology of gentility. This of course was the very concern that had given rise to romantic notions of authenticity, or the search for a

deeper, fundamental truth. The dark implication regarding human drives inherent in sensationalism contributed to the reframing of the question of authenticity. The realization that the impulses at the root of human desire might not be transcendental ideals cherished by romantics, but something baser, broke upon the consciousness slowly. In the coming chapter I explore how as early as the mid-nineteenth century the significance of this realization weighed on the imagination of America's leading intellectuals and led them to reconfigure their sense of the encounter with the foreign Other. That experience was re-imagined as a means of reincorporating the primal self and wellspring of individual will into consciousness.

---

<sup>1</sup> Bayard Taylor, A Journey to Central Africa; or, Life and Landscapes from Egypt to the Negro Kingdoms of the White Nile (New York: G. P. Putnam & Co., 1854), 133-137.

<sup>2</sup> 26 January 1852, Bayard Taylor, diary, item 45, Box 9, BTP, CUSC. Also see his entry from 16 January 1852 where he describes observing the naked women.

<sup>3</sup> Melville, Typee: A Romance of the South Sea (London: Folio Press, 1974), 149-50.

<sup>4</sup> Bayard Taylor, At Home and Abroad, 2<sup>nd</sup> series (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1862), 168.

<sup>5</sup> Homberger, Mrs. Astor's New York, 176.

<sup>6</sup> Sean Wilentz, Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the Working Class, 1788-1850 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 117, 405. See Patrick Conner, Oriental Architecture in the West (London: Thames and Huson, 1979), 131-153.

<sup>7</sup> For discussion of the Brevoort ball see Spann, The New Metropolis, 222, Homberger, Mrs. Astor's New York, 141-142.

<sup>8</sup> Edward Pessen, Riches, Class, and Power Before the Civil War (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Company, 1973), 22, 25. Jeffrey G. Williamson and Peter H. Lindert, American Inequality: A Macroeconomic History (New York: Academic Press, 1964).

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Edward Spann, The New Metropolis: New York City, 1840-1857 (New York, Columbia University Press, 1981), 224.

<sup>10</sup> James Stirling, Letters from the Slave States (London: J. W. Parker & Sons, 1857), 104.

<sup>11</sup> J. S., "Class Distinction a Social Necessity," New York Illustrated, 1 June 1861, 51.

<sup>12</sup> Rev. E. R. Chapman, Humanity in the City (New York: De Witt & Davenport, [1854]), 71.

<sup>13</sup> Stirling, Letters from the Slave States, 104.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Spann, The New Metropolis, 223.

<sup>15</sup> Rebecca Way Taylor to Bayard Taylor, 1 November 1852, Folder (2501-10), Bayard Taylor Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

<sup>16</sup> Pessen, Riches, 172.

<sup>17</sup> Bayard Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune: Related by Himself, A Story of American Life (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1864), 297.

<sup>18</sup> See Eric Homberger, Mrs. Astor's New York: Money and Social Power in a Gilded Age (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

<sup>19</sup> Taylor, At Home and Abroad, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ser., 21, 31.

<sup>20</sup> See Harris, Humbug. John Kuo Wei Tchen, New York before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882 (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 134-135.

- <sup>21</sup> Butler, William, The Land of the Veda: being personal reminiscences of India; its people, castes, thugs, and fakirs; its religions, mythology, principal monuments, palaces, and mausoleums. (New York: Carlton & Lanahan, 1872), 138.
- <sup>22</sup> Bayard Taylor, "Man and Climate," 8. Lecture Box, Bayard Taylor Collection [hereafter cited as BTC], Chester County Historical Society [hereafter cited as CCHS].
- <sup>23</sup> For a discussion of Barnum and Taylor's relationship see Neil Harris, Humbug: The Art of P. T. Barnum (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 180-181.
- <sup>24</sup> For reference to the popular Bowery shows after October 1847 see C. D. Odell, Annals of the New York Stage (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), vol. 5.
- <sup>25</sup> Taylor, A Journey to Central Africa; or, Life and Landscapes from Egypt to the Negro Kingdoms of the White Nile (New York: G. P. Putnam & Co., 1854), 178-9.
- <sup>26</sup> Spann, The New Metropolis, 224.
- <sup>27</sup> For more on the growth of the national grand tour see John F. Sears, Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). Dona Brown, Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Museum Press, 1995).
- <sup>28</sup> Richard Bentley, "Nile Notes, By a Traveller," The Athenaeum, 20 (March 29, 1851), 344.
- <sup>29</sup> "Nile Notes of a Haowadji," American Whig Review, 14 (July, 1851), 54.
- <sup>30</sup> George W. Curtis to Father, 15 March 1851, quoted in Gordon Milne, George William Curtis & the Genteel Tradition (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1956), 52.
- <sup>31</sup> Journal entry, 27 March 1851, quoted in see Gordon Milne, George William Curtis & the Genteel Tradition (Bloomington, IUP, 1956), 54.
- <sup>32</sup> Taylor, A Journey, 94-95.
- <sup>33</sup> Late July 1847, Bayard Taylor, "Journal," item 44, Box 9, Bayard Taylor Papers [hereafter cited as BTP], Cornell University Special Collection [hereafter cited as CUSC], Ithaca, NY.
- <sup>34</sup> Homberger, Mrs. Astor's New York, 176.
- <sup>35</sup> David Leverenz, Manhood and the American Renaissance (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 43, 48.
- <sup>36</sup> For examples see Marie Hansen-Taylor and Horace E. Scudder, Life and Letters of Bayard Taylor, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1884), 1:121-22, 1:126, 1:128.
- <sup>37</sup> Taylor discussed his financial situation in a letter to his friend George Boker on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 1851, Box 5, BTP, CUSC. He explains that he lost 700 dollars in paper, and incurred his partner's debt of 500 dollars.
- <sup>38</sup> Quoted in David Reynolds, Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography (New York: Vintage, 1995), 228.
- <sup>39</sup> Taylor, Journal, 12 October 47, item 44, Box 9, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>40</sup> Bayard Taylor, "American Life," Lecture Box, BTC, CCHS.
- <sup>41</sup> We should remember, however, that if Taylor did avail himself of his sexual freedom in the city he was not likely to have written about it in his journals let alone his letters. As we have seen, from an early age Taylor was highly self-conscious that his writing, no matter how private, was a public declaration and should be properly managed to project the image of himself that he wished others to see.
- <sup>42</sup> Taylor, "Diary 1847-1850," 24 July 1847, item 44, Box 9, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>43</sup> See Taylor's journal entries 22 May and July 24, 1847, *ibid*.
- <sup>44</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 14 March 47, Box 5, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>45</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 31 May 48, *ibid*.
- <sup>46</sup> Calvin Fletcher, The Diary of Calvin Fletcher: Including Letters to and from Calved Fletcher, 9 vols., eds. Gayle Thornbrough and Paula Corpuz (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1983), 5:xiii.
- <sup>47</sup> Taylor to Pennypacker, 30 June 1848, Box 6, BTP, CUSC. Also quoted in "Reminiscences of the Poet of Kennet Square," The Press, 17 September 1879.
- <sup>48</sup> The "Savage and the Maiden" appeared first in 1843 and returned to stage in 1844, 1845, 1846, and 1849). Odell, Annals, 4:76, 4:123.
- <sup>49</sup> Odell, Annals, 401; 487; 61; 140; 582.
- <sup>50</sup> For examples of advertisement of the performances see Odell, Annals, vol 3. Robert Bogdan, Freak Show: Present Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 179.

- <sup>51</sup> See also Ramona Morris and Desmond Morris, Men and Apes (London: Spheres, 1966); J Edward Wood, Giants and Dwarfs (London: Richard Bentley, 1868); and Martin Howard, Victorian Grotesque (London: Jupiter, 1977).
- <sup>52</sup> In his 1855 lecture "The Animal Man" Taylor referred directly to the "Siamese twins." He used them as an image of the divided within man between the ideal and the physical. He argued that like the twins these two sides of man were inseparable and that it was unhealthy to deny man's animal nature. This is a topic I will take-up in more in chapter seven. Bayard Taylor, "Animal Man," 7, Lecture Box, BTC, CCHS.
- <sup>53</sup> Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune, 419-20.
- <sup>54</sup> David Reynolds, Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville (Cambridge, Mass.: University of Harvard Press, 1988), 171.
- <sup>55</sup> Bayard Taylor, diary, item 40, box 12, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>56</sup> Bayard Taylor, "Childhood's Influence a Temperance Tale" [dated 1843], Box 10, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>57</sup> For more discussion of themes like the vulnerable and exploited seamstress see David Reynolds' Beneath the American Renaissance. On seamstresses see page 352. For an example of a murderous tale written by Taylor see his sketch of a story in a notebook dated from 1840. Bayard Taylor, scrapbook, Item 33, BTP, CUSC. Taylor describes reading a scandalous book about infidelity, for example, in his diary, 7 March 1842. See Taylor, diary, item 40, box 12, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>58</sup> Taylor's interest in Poe's autograph was described by Doctor Pennypacker in his "Reminiscences of the Poet of Kennet Square," Philadelphia Press, 17 September 1879.
- <sup>59</sup> Reynolds, Beneath the American Renaissance, 194.
- <sup>60</sup> Taylor mentions reading The Adventures of a Poet in his diary dated 10 March 1842. See item 40, box 12, BTP, CUSC. For other examples see Taylor's scrapbooks from the early 1840s at CCHS.
- <sup>61</sup> See Barbara Meil Hobson, Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition (Chicago: UCP, 1987).
- <sup>62</sup> Quoted in Reynolds, Walt Whitman's America, 228.
- <sup>63</sup> Reynolds, Beneath the American Renaissance, 194.
- <sup>64</sup> William Winter, Old Friends (1909). Tribune Chicago Illustrated, 19 June 1909. "William Winter's Recollections of his Literary Friends of Yesterday: Anecdotes of the Brilliant Bohemian Circle which Meet Nightly a Half Century Ago in the Cave of Phaff's." For an interesting discussion of Phaff's see Reynolds, Walt Whitman's American, 377.
- <sup>65</sup> Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune, 278.
- <sup>66</sup> John Godfrey's Fortune offers many scenes of life among the bohemian artists and the contrast between them and "acceptable society." As an example of acceptable society see page 321. On the bohemians see 323. On life in the "Cave" see page 324. Many of the bohemian characters were obviously based on Taylor's contemporaries. Smithers, for instance, is clearly Walt Whitman.
- <sup>67</sup> For more on Ballou see Peter Benson's articles "Maturin Murray Ballou," and "Gleason's Publishing Hall" in Publishers for Mass Entertainment in Nineteenth Century America, ed. Madeleine B. Stern (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1980).
- <sup>68</sup> Other example see James Boulden, An American Among the Orientals: Including an audience with the Sultan, and a visit to the interior of a Turkish harem (1855).
- <sup>69</sup> Charles Wilkes, Synopsis of the Cruise of the U. S. Exploration Expedition. Delivered before the National Institute, June 20, 1842 (Washington: P. Force, 1842). Also see his Narrative of the United States Exploration Expedition, 5 vols. (Philadelphia: Sherman, 1844).
- <sup>70</sup> For a discussion of the Mermaid see Neil Harris, Humbug: The Art of P. T. Barnum (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).
- <sup>71</sup> James Oliver, Wreck of the Glide, with recollections of the Fijis and the Wallis islands (New York: Wiley & Putnam, 1840); see Basil Thompson, The Fijians (London: William Heinemann, 1908).
- <sup>72</sup> Mary Davis (Cook) Wallis, Life in Feejee (Boston: W. Hoath, 1851), 31.
- <sup>73</sup> Taylor, Eldorado; or, Adventures in the Path of Empire (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988 [1850]), 275.
- <sup>74</sup> Taylor, Views A-Foot; or, Europe as seen with knapsack and staff (New York: Wiley & Putnam, 1846), 80, 162, 186, 192-193.
- <sup>75</sup> Taylor, Eldorado, 82-83.
- <sup>76</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 23 September 1849, Box 5, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>77</sup> Taylor, Eldorado, 170, 239, 101, 46-47.

- 
- <sup>78</sup> Ibid., 66.
- <sup>79</sup> Taylor quoted in Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 155.
- <sup>80</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 28 November 1849, ibid., 1:163-164.
- <sup>81</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 17 March 1850, ibid., 1:169.
- <sup>82</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 28 November 1849, ibid., 1:163-164.
- <sup>83</sup> Taylor to James T. Field, 10 May 50, Box 6, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>84</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 24 July 50, Box 5, BTP, CUSC. Taylor to James T. Field, 19 April 51, Box 6, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>85</sup> Taylor to John B. Phillips, 23 November 1850, Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:193.
- <sup>86</sup> Taylor to R. H. Stoddard, 27 December 1850, ibid., 1:195.
- <sup>87</sup> Taylor to George H. Boker, 1 May 1851, ibid., 1:209.
- <sup>88</sup> Taylor to John B. Phillips, 21 March 1851, Box 5, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>89</sup> Taylor to George H. Boker, 23 September 1849, ibid.
- <sup>90</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 22 October 1849, ibid.
- <sup>91</sup> Taylor to George H. Boker, 22 May 51, ibid.
- <sup>92</sup> Taylor, A Journey. Preface, signed NY July 1854.
- <sup>93</sup> Taylor to George H. Boker, 18 October 1852, Box 5, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>94</sup> Taylor, A Journey, 510.
- <sup>95</sup> Ibid., 333-337. See also Taylor, The Lands of the Saracen; or Pictures of Palestine, Asia Minor, Sicily and Spain (New York: G. P. Putnam & Co., 1854), 221.
- <sup>96</sup> Taylor, A Journey, 358-9.
- <sup>97</sup> Taylor, The Lands, 145.
- <sup>98</sup> Taylor, A Journey, 518-19.
- <sup>99</sup> Taylor, The Lands, 133; 137-138.
- <sup>100</sup> Ibid., 153.
- <sup>101</sup> Taylor, A Journey, 30.
- <sup>102</sup> Ibid., 133-137. Also see again his account in his private diary where he describes the “warmth of blood seeing dancers.” 26 January 1852, Bayard Taylor, diary, item 45, Box 9, BTP, CUSC. Also see his entry from 16 January 1852 where he describes observing the naked women.
- <sup>103</sup> “Japan and LooChoo,” 4, 25, Lecture Box, BTC, CCHS.
- <sup>104</sup> Ibid., 23.
- <sup>105</sup> John Williamson Palmer, Up and Down the Irrawaddi; or, the golden dragon: being passages of adventure in the Burman Empire (New York: Rudd & Carleton, 1859), 9.
- <sup>106</sup> Palmer, The New and the Old; or, California and India in Romantic Aspects (New York: Rudd & Carleton, 1859).

## Chapter 7

### The Longing for Authenticity: Searching for the Primal Self

In this chapter I pause to reflect upon the private existential considerations that shaped Taylor's transnationalist impulses during the 1850s. Here I explore the way he and the writers associated with the American Renaissance used the metaphors of travel and encounter with the foreign to express the capacity for human depravity and hypocritical self-delusion. I trace this tendency among the authors to a dilemma that they shared. Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Henry Thoreau and to a lesser extent Ralph Waldo Emerson struggled like Taylor with tension between their self-image as artists and the necessities of professional authorship.<sup>1</sup> Many of them perceived the commercial dimension of their writing as a betrayal of their art. They came to believe that, as Melville wrote, the "test of distinction is getting to be reversed, and, therefore, to see one's 'mug' in a magazine, is presumptive evidence that he's a nobody."<sup>2</sup> Melville, for one, dismissed those of his writings that had been produced with the goal of achieving popular success. They were, he said, not a true reflection of him. Referring to his novels Redburn and White-Jacket he once said:

No reputation that is gratifying to me, can possibly be achieved by either of these books. They are two jobs, which I have done for money—being forced to it, as other men are to sawing wood. [...] Being books, then, written in this way, my only desire for their "success" (as it is called) springs from my pocket, and not from my heart.<sup>3</sup>

Despite his rejection of these books Melville had used them to explore the issues that prompted his disavowal. He and the other authors employed the stories of travel and encounter to construct allegories about the confrontation with the illusion of purity. Beyond that their stories emphasized the reconciliation between ideals and necessity.

Few Americans were as sensitive as these writers to hypocrisy. Nevertheless, some bourgeois Americans, as we have seen, sought to maintain a sense of personal distinctiveness through the cultivation of sentimental and romantic passion. The average educated man may not have believed, as these writers liked to, that he was “above” the market, but he was also not entirely content to think of himself solely as a man “sawing wood.” Their efforts towards cultivation made them at least faintly aware of the ambiguities and moral conundrums surrounding bourgeois life. The emphasis on sincerity and transcendent ideals produced friction with bourgeois social and material ambitions. In some ways, in other words, these artists’ problems were representative. The tension that artists experienced between the demands of aesthetic purity and personal distinctiveness on one hand, and the debasing necessities of economic survival and temptations of a worldly sort on the other, approximated the fundamental moral dilemma that many bourgeois Americans confronted when they sought to reconcile personal piety with the self-interested behavior encouraged in the competitive, consumer-oriented, market society.

In Taylor audiences encountered a shallow version of the thoughts animating the travel allegories of Melville and others. Of all the ways that Taylor was exposed to the skeptical attitudes of the day, it was as an artist that he felt them most acutely. All his life like some of his fellow writers Taylor was haunted by the conception of an artist as one whose purity and distinctiveness of spirit, hence the quality of one’s art, depended upon independence from the market. Artists could not “serve God and Mammon,” Taylor believed. By the 1850s based on this definition he faced increasing trouble maintaining a satisfying image of himself as an artist. Like other writers Taylor gravitated to the

themes of travel and encounter to express his frustration and to seek reconciliation. The less penetrating and conventional way in which Taylor approached these themes suited many and thus helps account for his popularity.

### **Artistic Hypocrisy and its Connection to the Dilemma of Bourgeois Identity**

In the years after moving to New York City Taylor repeatedly learned that unlike the genteel and aristocratic elites who were gifted with leisured wealth necessary pursue purely artistic aims, he had to earn his way in the world. In truth Taylor's failure in Phoenixville had taught him that he was unwilling to live a life of poverty and anonymity struggling as a small town newspaperman. Nor was he able to satisfy his vanity as a virtuous and unknown romantic poet. However, even after his move Taylor struggled to remain true to his romantic conceits. He tried whenever possible to take solace in the gassy pathos of the unappreciated genius and cushion his vanity with spleen against mediocrity. Necessity, however, proved habitually unimpressed; and so, he had early begun to compromise with his self-image as an artist. To his credit he never convinced himself that he had not lost something in the exchange. Indeed he speedily evinced a pragmatic take on the situation, as he put the matter plainly to a friend in the late 1840s.

Any employment, however hard, is better than uncertain dependence on the pen alone; although I have as yet had little experience, I have seen enough to convince me that it is a sad fate to wear out one's brain for bread.<sup>4</sup>

By the time he left for New York he wrote in his diary the sad realization "that in order to succeed in the world, in a worldly way [...] I must forgo poetizing and put a curb on my imagination—give up [...] the high Ideal." Yet even here he held out hope for his lofty dreams. He told himself that he could return to them "when wealthy."<sup>5</sup>

The popular success he experienced in New York during the late 1840s kept this illusion alive. He believed that financial independence might let him withdraw from the market and become a gentleman author. In the coming years it became a habit for Taylor to see his next commercial project as perhaps the one that would liberate him from necessity. And yet by the early 1850s he had already begun to discern that life might become for him an endless grind: the constant chasing after an unrealizable dream. By then the conflicts between art and life in New York highlighted the humiliating compromise he had made. To his friend John he wrote to complain of being too “full of this earth-life,” as he called it.

I am rolling an eternal stone of Sisyphus, and if I pause a minute, it is but to catch breath and begin again. [...] You see, I am. [...] No, by heavens! we are sufficiently made slaves by the necessary requirements of a world in which we sometimes feel strangely out of place—and I feel a perverse spirit of independence which I defiantly assert. “The black fiendish spirit is again working within me,” you will say when you read this.<sup>6</sup>

Taylor was simply describing an exaggerated version of what he had experienced. In frustration Taylor lashed-out at the middle-class culture that surrounded him and seemed to have forced him into this betrayal of his values. It was a common response among his literary contemporaries and it also mirrored disaffection felt by others. David Reynolds identifies one expression of this distrust in the “unmasking imagery”—“violent, often sensational language designed to strip hypocrites of their sanctified cloaks and bring to light horridness within”—found in popular writing.<sup>7</sup> Another can be seen in the rise of social protest literature that dwelled upon the scandalous juxtaposition of wealth and poverty. Finally, the romantic tradition of animus towards conventionality fueled increasingly harsh attacks against middle class conceits. By the mid-nineteenth century the critiques by the aesthetic elite against bourgeois conventionality were more vehement

than ever. In his own novel of New York life, Taylor later described the bourgeoisie that was “constantly violating the rules of its own demonstrative gentility!”<sup>8</sup>

While these attacks were troubling to the pride of middle-class Americans, much more disturbing was the way these suspicions undercut the affirmative basis of bourgeois identity by bringing into question the sense of personal distinctiveness: exposing the hypocrisies of individual merit and what Taylor would later call the “conventional masks of Society.”<sup>9</sup> For a man who fancied himself a poet this hypocrisy was no where more evident than in the pretensions of romantic feeling he discovered in the salons of New York in the late 1840s. After getting over his initial wonder at the luster of social life in the great metropolis, Taylor settled into a growing “disgust at people who talk about ‘soul-life’ and the ‘spirit’s mission,’ when they have not even a soul that the lowest order of an angel would give a job to do.”<sup>10</sup> In his novel John Godfrey’s Fortune he satirized the pretensions of romantic egotism that he found all too common. “Can’t you remember something from Schiller, or Goethe, or Rikter?” pleaded one of these wilting parlor romantics to the hero.<sup>11</sup>

Yet, like many of his fellow writers, Taylor had increasing difficulty differentiating between his labors and the shallow pandering of two-bit hacks. Even before he had been forced into the competitive world of New York Taylor was put-off by the efforts of the business savvy Nathaniel Parker Willis to market him as a printer-apprentice and self-help success story. Willis understood something that Taylor’s honeyed romantic posing made him reluctant to accept: that sentiment and the authorial persona were devices to generate sales. Taylor could stomach the subordination of substance to style when it came to his journalistic endeavors; the news, after all, was not

art. In his eyes, however, poetry and literature were a different matter: one that touched the heart of his romantic self-image. Yet in New York he found himself forced by circumstance to pimp his muse.

In order to understand how these forces affected Taylor we can look for clues again in the story of John, Taylor's autobiographical double in John Godfrey's Fortune. For want of money, Taylor's John crossed over from the ideals of art to the needs of the market in an innocent manner when asked by an editor for a "few short, sentiment stories, to piece out with now and then,--something light and airy [...] such as women like to read."<sup>12</sup> Just as Taylor had done when he was struggling for money, John next turned to writing popular songs. John's incremental corruption led first to a sense of doubt and then failure. In time these emotions evolved into a general misanthropy, and finally shame and self-loathing.

What had at first seemed to John a turn of luck in finding such easy work was soon shadowed by uncertainty. As his dignity collapsed, John believed that if he had stayed true to his art he never would have "overcome his distaste for the hard, practical materialism" and given himself to the hackwork that kept him from creating something of merit.<sup>13</sup> Within months his compromise led to a sense of hopelessness. "The necessity which impelled me to secure some sort of provision for the future" left me to believe, John said, there was "no way of reaching the Olympian society of the celebrated authors, or in otherwise dragging myself out of the double insignificance [...] into which I had fallen."<sup>14</sup> Soon after that, he felt the steady growth of a misanthropic rage.

It's enough to make one despise the human race. I could grind out such stuff by the bushel; why not take my revenge on the fools in this way? Why not give them the absurdest satire, which they shall suck down as pure sentiment? I'll laugh at them, and they'll pay me for it!<sup>15</sup>

As in a sensational temperance novel the self-deception and hysteria of the above passage signaled the downward spiral into debasement and madness.

In fact, exasperated as he was Taylor told friends he was tempted to take solace in drink. This was a far cry from the temperance convictions he had once shared with John. It was, as he said, “the black fiendish spirit [...] working within.” In short, his frustrations over the difference between his hopes and the realities of life were pushing him to question, if not reject, the idealism of his youth as simpering fantasy. “Enough [...] [h]ow could I dare to think of poetry, when there is a murder trial, two accidents, and a religious anniversary to put into shape for the evening paper!”<sup>16</sup>

John Godfrey's Fortune employs the sensational motifs of reformist tracts in other ways. A central theme of the novel was the lost innocence of the artist, and the unmasking of the romantic persona. In John, the author projected the psychological crises precipitated by the realization of his interdependence with the market and the demystification of his romantic persona. Early in the novel John is made to recollect after one of his more strident proclamations of artistic distinctiveness:

I had yet to learn that the finer clay, upon which I congratulated myself, is more easily soiled by the Devils' fingers than one of coarser grit, --that neither do such natures as mind monopolize the beauty, the romance, and the tragedy of life, nor are they exempt from the temptations which assail the ignorant, the excesses committed by the vulgar.<sup>17</sup>

At the beginning, John explained, he had a thoroughly romantic notion of art. But it was a view that slowly faded as he struggled to make his way in the city. Following the publication of his first collection of poems, he confided: “A book for me had hitherto possessed a sublime, mystical individuality of its own” that would allow him “to be classed among those silent, eloquent personalities! [...] side by side with” the authors of

“‘Paradise Lost’ or ‘Childe Harold.’” However the self-serving, instrumental nature of his “art” soon became evident to him. The book, he now saw, “had grown beneath my hand, by stages of manufacture as distinctly material as those which go to the formation of a shoe or a stove.”<sup>18</sup>

John came to realize as Taylor had during this period that the romantic artist’s belief in his own transcendent purpose and aesthetic purity was nothing more than a pretense, much like that of the bourgeois conceit of superior taste and sentiment that he loved to critique. In time, it seemed that even art became hopelessly corrupted by the alienating effects of the new economy of production. Once one admitted this it was easy to conclude that the romantics’ claim to saintly distinctiveness and exclusivity were a sham, maintained at the expense of actually admitting their participation in the world of men. Taylor, we could conclude, felt that his idealism left them alienated from reality.

Taylor emphasized this point in the character of Swansford, a dedicated artist whom John befriends in New York. Swansford was indeed the sort of artist who “had never, and never would, overcome his distaste for the hard, practical materialism which he encountered on every side.” As John said of him, “I dimly felt, in the course of conversations, the presence of a purer and loftier ideal than my own.”<sup>19</sup> Never wavering from his ideals he eked out a living teaching music, while distaining to corrupt his art by writing the tunes for lucrative popular songs. His otherworldly purity was illustrated by his steady physical wasting and eventual death. While Taylor evidently admires the character as an uncompromising idealist, the composer’s fate signaled Taylor’s belief that such a position was unnatural to man’s temporal destiny. This is what Taylor means when he has John say “Art spoils you for life.”<sup>20</sup>

For Taylor one event in particular brought the conflict between his self-image as an artist and the commercial nature of his artistic production into focus. In the late summer of 1850 P. T. Barnum sponsored a contest for an original “American” song to be sung by Swedish Jenny Lind at her first concert at Castle Gardens. Taylor’s victory of the \$200 dollar prize brought howls of protest from a number of the other 752 contestants. They objected that the presence of George Putnam, Taylor’s publisher, and George Ripley, his colleague at the Tribune, upon the selection committee had given Taylor an unfair advantage. It undoubtedly did. Anticipating the complaints before the news was announced, Taylor had considered putting his friend John Stoddard’s name in as the author, but vanity persuaded him to keep his own instead.<sup>21</sup> He was stunned when his selection subjected him to “a flaying [...] at the hands of every sixpenny critic in the country.”<sup>22</sup> Angry competitors derided the competition as fixed. One published a collection of the competing songs (presumably to show their superiority), and berated Taylor as “Barnum’s Poet Laureate.”

The matter embarrassed Taylor’s sense of his artistic purity. He blamed his participation in the contest on the need for money to care for Mary during her illness. “I am obliged to mingle” in the affair, he wrote. And he insisted on the complete “impartiality” of the committee in selecting him.<sup>23</sup> Taylor feared others would see him as one of those writers who wrote for cash, whose art rose no higher than needed to satisfy the masses and whose principles sunk low enough to insure victory over competitors. When introduced before a lecture in Brooklyn as “Bayard Taylor: the successful competitor for the Jenny Lind prize” he exploded with indignation, “Is that damned song to be the only thing which will save my name from oblivion?”<sup>24</sup> Soon he saw the whole

matter as a sign of his corruption. “I may confess,” he wrote to a friend, “that at times I feel a bitter sense of degradation of having written at all, and my success seems but to increase it. This is a proper punishment to me for having defiled the temple of divine Poetry.”<sup>25</sup> In this mood, the popularity he received and the honors that came to him were proof of how his art had become polluted.

Scarcely a day passes but some pleasant recognition is given me. I was invited last Friday to dine with Bancroft and Cooper; on Saturday with Sir Edward Belcher and Herman Melville [...] [but] These things seem like mockeries, sent to increase my bitterness of heart.”<sup>26</sup>

The contest’s connection with P. T. Barnum made Taylor’s participation in the event a particularly embarrassing example of the linkage between his art and the marketplace. By the 1840s Barnum’s name had become synonymous with the wild, unrestrained business of popular entertainment, where “humbug” in the service of financial reward triumphed over substance. Having his name connected with this impresario of bunk undercut Taylor’s respectability as a serious artist. It was for this reason that Taylor was careful to maintain public distance from Barnum. Despite the business advantages the relationship might provide, Taylor appears to have gone out of his way to avoid publicizing the connection.<sup>27</sup> Taylor never mentions Barnum in his letters to literary acquaintances and in his writings treats him as a stranger.<sup>28</sup>

The intensity of the attacks upon Taylor exposed the competitive, market driven nature of professional authorship—a vocation he would have preferred to see as the romantic pursuit of a higher ideal. In his diary he wrote that the reaction of his peers “has given me new experience of the mean and contemptible jealousy existing among the shoals of our literature.” “No more songs, no more ‘infidelity to the Divinity of song’” he swore.<sup>29</sup> If he had not accepted the fact before, he knew now that his art was part of a

corrupt and competitive business. Whatever he wrote, “The publishing showmen would of course parade our wonderful qualities, and the snarling critics in the crowd would show their teeth[.]”<sup>30</sup>

By the early 1850s Taylor had the feeling, which he later described in one of his novels, that his disillusionment with his job as a journalist, editor, and popular writer had left him “quite broken loose from my youthful moorings and [...] more or less adrift, both in faith and morals.” Though, as he said, “my life was so far correct,” it was so “through the negative virtue of habit.” And as such “a strong current” he feared might very well manage to carry him off.<sup>31</sup> Mary’s death was the shifting tide he feared. If in his eyes the dependence upon the market meant that the emotional content of his writing was hopelessly compromised by the deceitful and corrupted practical need to manipulate readers and make a buck. Mary’s death redoubled these emerging feelings of uncertainty. Her death made Taylor’s decision to delay gratification of his emotional and physical needs in order to work appear foolish. In the Spring of 1851 Taylor confessed to his friend George Boker, “I am haunted sometimes, by a dreary idea of having lived in vain.”<sup>32</sup> Recognition of this situation leached strength from the reassuring sentimental or romantic self-image as champion of heightened purpose and innocent devotee to feeling: two identities that he and others cultivated to counter the absence of moral purity and personal substance in their daily lives. As he wrote to Lowell after his return from Asia, “we all fall away from our early ideals, and I have long since given up mine, because I found it unattainable.”<sup>33</sup>

### **Travel and the Exploration of Corruption in the Heart of Civilized Man**

It was no coincidence that Taylor wrote these lines after his journey around the world. For Taylor and others in this atmosphere of suspicion of personal innocence, and indeed uncertainties about the virtues of man's moral nature as a whole, the foreign emerged as an arena to dramatize the divide between the civilized man's idealization of himself and the reality of his true nature.

By the 1840s the expression of dark desires can be seen among many writers of the period. In Henry David Thoreau's writings readers find proclamations like "I love the wild not less than the good."<sup>34</sup> According to David Reynolds sentiment like this expressed a "dark philosophy" not uncommon at the time. Humankind was adrift in a world without virtue or meaning. Forsaken, the individual is left to drain what substance from life he can through the thrill of raw experience and pleasures of personal gratification.<sup>35</sup>

In much of the literature of the American Renaissance the foreign Other often served as a means to scrutinize the presumption of personal virtue that writers of the period saw as the principle vice of the bourgeois culture. As Hawthorne wrote in his diary, "There is evil in every human heart, which may remain latent, perhaps, through the whole of life; but circumstances may rouse it to activity."<sup>36</sup> In Hawthorne, Melville, and Taylor this skepticism found expression in echoes of Calvinist notions of human depravity. More broadly they shared a general distrust of men. A favorite theme among them was the tendency of men to deny their sins. Driven by shock at the gap between ideals and practices in Protestant America, the authors harbored a more pervasive suspicion of human nature. Beginning in the 1840s Melville used the figure of primitive

man as a device to attack—in the tradition of the Rousseauian noble savage—the bombast of civilization. And yet unlike Rousseau at least some of the authors of the American Renaissance harbored a belief in the inherent depravity of man that belied any notion of primitive innocence.

Taylor's experiments with sensationalist motifs of the foreign and pursuit of cathartic release arose from a reluctant sympathy with this dark outlook. It signaled his engagement with the contradictions of personal identity in Victorian America, contradictions that the skepticism of sensationalist thought had helped to expose. Like many of his colleagues Taylor was fascinated by the deeper implications of civilized man's connection with the savage. Taylor often sought, though in a less sophisticated fashion than his illustrious contemporaries, to use the contrast between the barbarous and civilized peoples to reveal the shared underlying nature of men. By elevating the character of the barbarian above the depravity often associated with him and lowering the assessment of civilized man from the supernal position at the pinnacle of human progress, he made a case that man's true character lay between the two.

Examples in Eldorado suggest Taylor's deeper engagement with the dark philosophy underlying sensationalism. Beneath the uplifting story of success attained by perseverance and restraint, lay an alluring subtext of recklessness rewarded by random fortune. The frequent gambling scenes are described with a lurid fascination for the play of chance. Taylor's admiration for the wild and risky spirit is evident. Though elsewhere he struggled to deny the implication, the reader cannot help but see that Taylor thought of the gambling table as a simile for the entire speculative venture of the 49ers; the author's repeated mention of the tiny gambling tent "Eldorado" in San Francisco that mirrors the

title of his own book describing the entire Gold Rush experience would seem to suggest the link. Perhaps too the game of chance served as a metaphor for the challenge of everyday life elsewhere, for it is evident, as suggested before, that Taylor likened the pursuit of gold in California with the condition of the democratic marketplace.

Certainly the Gold Rush appeared so for many. The scene it presented of a greedy multitude fighting one another to dig in the dirt, and then fritter away their treasure in games of chance, drink, and prostitutes—all as they rushed headlong into becoming soulless broken men—did look remarkably like what many feared society had become. The simile suggested in Taylor a dawning awareness of random fortune, the brutality of the society in which he lived, and the doubtful value of scruples. Perhaps even more darkly, it conveyed on his part an apprehension concerning the dream of a better life, the belief in which encouraged personal restraint. The name he chose for his book might itself be instructive on this account, for the city of gold was after all an illusion.

Taylor's accounts of his journey around the world offer an even more vivid example of his preoccupation with darker themes. From the outset Taylor framed his journey as a pursuit of the bracing sensations of "animal life" for itself. It is a radical position that stretched well beyond the romantically inspired indulgence in feeling or celebration of leisure as a means to a higher end; instead it hints at his flirtation with an amoral philosophy, one skeptical of the earnest Protestant ethos and dedicated instead to the self-interested fulfillment of passion. The leitmotif of decay that Taylor returned to throughout the voyage buttressed this sense of moral liberation. One is left at times with the suggestion that human striving was ultimately pointless and doomed to failure. In

this mood, Taylor's evident respect for what he perceives to be a relaxed attitude makes the "Oriental" outlook seem wisdom compared to the frantic striving of Americans.

As an example of the ambiguousness that appeared in Taylor's arguments, in other places he described this lack of striving as a fatalistic. In what was a commonplace view of the day, he interpreted it as passivity and contended it was the reason Asia was dominated by the West. And yet even here, in Taylor's hands, there surfaced a further layer of ambiguity. The latter angle of interpretation suggested an equally subversive reading of the Western imperial venture as an undertaking driven by selfish impulses of greed, and covered over by the callow self-deception and contrived morality of the civilizing mission.

These themes in Taylor's travel writing mirror the subversive thrust present in dark philosophy: both harbored doubts about the conventional ideals that passed for truth in early nineteenth-century culture; both reflected criticisms advanced by social critics, reformers, and the nation's literary elite against the complacent belief held by the middle class of their innocence in the perpetuation of worldly evils.

To those sensitive to self-deception, foreign landscapes were a perfect place to illustrate the hypocritical nature of bourgeois identity and the foolishness of human conceits. Edgar Allen Poe's The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym provides other examples. By all standard measures the eponymous hero of the book appears at the beginning of his tale as a young man with a promising future. He was the son of "a respectable trader," the grandson of "an attorney in good practice," and a fortunate young man waiting to inherit "a tolerable sum of money." For all his fortune, however, we soon learn he cares not one wit. Without shame he confesses to being disobedient, reckless,

and a drunkard. The young man appears proud of his sins. Pym's subversive character surfaces following his drink induced near-death experience while sailing a light craft amid a storm.

It might be supposed that a catastrophe such as I have just related would have effectually cooled my incipient passion for the sea. On the contrary, I never experienced a more ardent longing for the wild adventures incident to the life of a navigator than within a week after our miraculous deliverance. [...] It is strange, too, that [what] most strongly enlisted my feelings in behalf of the life of a seaman, [...] [were the] more terrible moments of suffering and despair. For the bright side of the painting I had a limited sympathy. My visions were of shipwreck and famine; of death or captivity among barbarian hordes; of a lifetime dragged out in sorrow and tears, upon some gray and desolate rock, in an ocean unapproachable and unknown. Such visions or desires—for they amounted to desires—are common, I have since been assured, to the whole numerous race of the melancholy among men—at the time of which I speak I regarded them only as prophetic glimpses of a destiny which I felt myself in a measure bound to fulfill.

Pym's confession suggests the perversity that sometimes accompanied the fascination with exotic adventure. Behind his "gloomy yet glowing imagination" lay an irrationality, distrust of human nature, and fatalistic belief in the inconsequence of man. He sees a heartless and uncaring universe in which one must take what one can. It was a view far different from the sunny beliefs of sentimental Victorians.<sup>37</sup>

Elsewhere in the novel the two ships on which Pym become settings where the destructiveness of man irrational, but also rational nature, were displayed. On the Grampus Pym becomes caught in a series of mutinies driven by the destructive desires of his fellow crewmembers. The first eliminates the Captain, the symbol of rational authority that holds humans together by suppressing personal desire. Freed from their restraints, the mutineers turn upon each other. Some want to seek fortune in piracy, others wish to pursue sensual gratification on the islands of the South Sea. Conversely on the second ship the death of all aboard was caused by the belief that man might master

nature: the crew dies in the act of exploring the Arctic. The region's frigid weather symbolizes both the cold, emotionless self-control of rationality and its dangers. Most importantly, in each instance, rather than a silent victim of events Pym was a critical agent in the destruction of all around him.

Thus to the older tendency to see the exotic lands as theaters where one's moral character was shaped and strengthened, another layer was added. For the writers of the American Renaissance the isolation of the ocean, desert, forest, island, polar ice, or alienating surrounding of a foreign land became the setting of a deeper, more complex sense of moral ambiguity that accompanied the demise of their belief in their own innocence. As Ishmael explained at the outset of Moby Dick, he became a sailor because in the sea lies "still deeper the meaning of that story of Narcissus, who because he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into it and was drowned. But the same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans."<sup>38</sup>

The idea that civilized man differed in no great degree from the savage he purported to have risen above was a disturbing possibility. It haunted the talk of progress and civilization in the thinking of Taylor and his contemporaries. If primitive man's greatest failing lay in his lack of material, moral, and cultural improvement, the growing recognition of the moral failings of modern society, and the evident allure of savage experience raised profound questions about contemporary virtue.

It was in the words of some of America's mid-nineteenth century cultural elite that the comparison was most incisively drawn. Away from the public eye in their private notebooks men like Thoreau contemplated the comparison with fury.

Who are the inhabitants of London and New York but savages who have built cities and forsaken for a season hunting and war? Who are the Blackfeet and the Tartars but citizens roaming the plains and dwelling in wigwams and tents?<sup>39</sup>

Emerson too ridiculed the veneer of respectability with which bourgeois culture attempted to hide the ugly side of the market. In a journal he entertained himself with this sarcastic jab.

In the Fejee islands, it appears, cannibalism is now familiar. They eat their own wives and children. We only devour widows' houses & great merchants outwit & absorb the substance of small ones and every man feeds on his neighbors labor if he can. It is a milder form of cannibalism.<sup>40</sup>

The suggestion in both comments that modern man remained burdened with the vices of the primitive was already implicit in the sensational and reformist literature of the day. Listening to reformers talk broodingly of the "savagery" of the market, the menacing "jungle" of the modern city, or of moral "degeneration," contemporaries could not help draw that conclusion. The language of "barbarity" pervaded the discourse on social ills. As Herman Melville wrote in 1848:

When I consider the vices, cruelties, and enormities of every kind that spring up in the tainted atmosphere of a feverish civilisation [sic], I am inclined to think that so far as the relative wickedness of the parties is concerned, four or five Marquesan islanders sent to the United States as missionaries might be quite as useful as an equal number dispatched to the islands in similar capacity.<sup>41</sup>

In many, we may recall, the use of force and the incorporation of "backward" peoples into the nation, suggested the word empire and thus foreshadowed decline. At the same time it also bespoke the widespread fear of what might be called civilized barbarity: recognition of the potential or perhaps existing qualities of the primitive in modern man. Certainly one woeful expression of modern man's failing to be "civilized" came in his treatment of the peoples he saw as inferior to him. Even in the nineteenth-century all but the most ardent advocates of progress recognized the tragedy of

imperialist expansion. While Americans liked to thrust the guilt of empire upon the Old World, the reality of their nation's genocidal treatment of the Native American, exploitation of African slaves, aggression against Mexico, participation in the expansion of global commerce and military domination, could hardly be ignored.

Recognition by skeptics of the depraved state of modern society and the barbarism of empire suggested to some that civilized man's shortcomings went beyond the tragedy of alienation fretted over by romantics. As sensationalist literature suggested, beneath civilized man's discontent, a darker truth lay unexplored: modern man, it seemed, remained driven by the same destructive impulses as the primitive. "All this talk about travel" is "a humbug" Melville's *Redburn* is given to say, because man is the same everywhere.<sup>42</sup>

Examining Taylor's lectures, one discovers that his belief in the universal nature of man competes with his notions of human inequality. From the popularity of Taylor's lectures readers might assume he regaled his audiences with thrilling incidents and exploited popular sensationalistic imagery of the horror, violence, and sin associated with adventure and exoticism. Many previous scholars have viewed Taylor's lectures as little more than entertainments marred by racist commentary. The lectures consisted, according to one historian, of "colorful materials about far-off people and places." Taylor's objective, argued these critics, was simply to entertain his audiences "with his exciting anecdotes and reminiscences of personal experience." As a consequence his lectures "attained no depth of thought."<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately scholars have made these assertions while rarely consulting the lectures themselves. Although Taylor did describe the thrilling incidents, his talks were more philosophical in style. Similarly his racism

was balanced in places by a degree of empathy with native peoples. This did not escape the eye of his nineteenth century audiences. His lecture “The Arab,” one Ohio paper reported, gave a surprisingly “flattering and poetic view of the tastes, mental characteristics, habits, and religion of the roving Arabs of the present day.” It also demonstrated in regard to the defects of civilized man himself, as the paper politely put it, “a great power for nice discrimination” of the kind that could be expected of a “highly cultivated mind.”<sup>44</sup>

The vast majority of Taylor’s audiences did not take offense to the subversive possibilities of his comments. In part this may be explained by the fact that there was a great deal in the lectures to reassure his audience’s belief in their moral authority. And yet it may be true that they were also willing to entertain doubts concerning some of the moral certainties that dominated their lives. In his skepticism toward civilization, as well as his frequently less bigoted and sometimes even laudatory attitude towards the Other, Taylor’s lectures appeared to be more penetrating and unflinching examinations of man’s authentic nature than accounts that dismissed anything foreign as backward. In the course of considering the question of human nature he frequently abandoned the simple dualisms of innocence/corruption and savagery/civilization. Absent them he suggested all men possessed some degree of virtue as well as sin, including those who claimed superior development. Echoing Melville, Taylor wrote: “[H]uman passions are much the same everywhere.” While it is true, he said, “the life of Man, in different climates and among different races, presents as many distinct hues, as the ray of light after it has passed through the prism” but the same “white light” cast itself over all men.<sup>45</sup>

Exercising his “great power for nice discrimination” Taylor was joining his contemporaries in a preoccupation with the hypocrisy of modern man: the failure of civilized man to come to terms with his corruption. Hawthorne, for one, was obsessed with the theme of hypocrisy. It functions as a pivotal element in the plot of The Scarlet Letter. Dimmsdale’s refusal to admit his sin, for example, serves as the lie around which the story revolves. In another example, Thoreau’s experiment at Walden was dedicated to illustrating the falseness of modern society. As a contemporary reviewer wrote, Thoreau’s foray into the forest penetrates “to the very pith and core of modern society, lays bare the worm of corruption which preys upon its vitals—shows hideous rottenness concealed beneath a fair and alluring exterior.”<sup>46</sup>

Yet it may be Melville’s obsession with hypocrisy that most closely paralleled the concerns afloat in popular culture. From first to last Melville’s writings form what might be called a drama of masks, concerned almost without exception with deceit, masquerade, and hypocrisy. Melville stages an unrelenting assault on what Ishmael in Moby Dick called the “civilized hypocrisies and bland deceits” of modern man.<sup>47</sup> Frequently his novels revolve around a young man’s journey into the world that tests his naivety. The travelers learn that men both consciously and unconsciously hide behind masks. Typically the guise of the youthful seeker was his sense of personal innocence or separation from the world’s evil affairs. Like all men, in his heart he knows this mask to be a lie, and that he too participates in earthly sin. The thought of this lie of innocence is the “mild image” that he, like Narcissus, sees in the “fountain” and that “torments” him into plunging into the water.<sup>48</sup> Melville’s description of Toby, a character from Typee, is suggestive of the existential predicament at the core of many of his characters. He is, the

author explained, typical of “that class of rovers you sometimes meet at sea, who never reveal their origin, never allude to home, and go rambling over the world as if pursued by some mysterious fate they cannot possibly elude.”<sup>49</sup>

The experience of the traveler, however, tests this mask of innocence. In Melville’s writings the protagonists are frequently forced to make a moral choice between acceptance of the truth and reengagement with the world or the continued estrangement that comes with denial. Some, like Taji the hero of Mardi, choose to continue the lie. After killing a priest who guards a beautiful maiden intended for sacrifice Taji must face-up to the deed and what it says about him.

Remorse smote me hard; and like lightening I asked myself, whether the death-deed I had done was sprung of a virtuous motive, the rescuing a captive from thrall; or whether beneath the pretence, I had engaged in this fatal affray from some other, and selfish purpose; the companionship of a beautiful maid. But throttling the thought, I swore to be gay.<sup>50</sup>

Throttling recognition of the sexual impulses that led him to act, Taji clings to an illusion about himself. Melville’s heroes in Redburn and White Jacket liberate themselves from such lies.

Exotic peoples encountered in most of Melville’s stories serve as a foil for the protagonist and his culture. In Typee and Omoo, for instance, the differences between the “savages” Melville’s travelers meet were intended to highlight the arbitrary behavior of “civilized man,” alternatively exposing the deceit of the masks they wear, the depravity that lurks below, and the depths of their own self-delusions. His ship’s crews function as microcosms of society and its “moral enfeeblement.”<sup>51</sup> Queequeg—himself a traveler who has left home “to learn among the Christians, the arts whereby to make his people still happier than they were; and more than that still better than they were”—

summarized his realization that civilized man is no better, perhaps even worse, than those they lord their morality over:

Alas! the practices of whalemens soon convinced him that even Christians could be both miserable and wicked; infinitely more so, than all his father's heathens. Arrived at last in old Sag Harbor; and seeing what the sailors did there; and then going on to Nantucket, and seeing how they spent their wages in that place also, poor Queequeg gave it up for lost. Thought he, it's a wicked world in all meridians; I'll die a pagan.<sup>52</sup>

Melville shared his subversive beliefs with a much larger number of his fellow citizens. In his writing the claims of moral virtue echoed those heard throughout American culture. He believed that more often than not these protestations were simply a veil behind which people hide self-serving aims. A survey of sensational literature reveals that others shared this view. Melville frequently characterized the pretense of good as a device for the perpetuation of evil. "Goodness" could be a sin in itself. It was in this sense that Thoreau wondered to himself "What demon possessed me that I behaved so well?"<sup>53</sup>

Besides sailors, Melville singled out two other classes for particular derision in this regard: merchants and missionaries whose combined efforts left the "savages" of the world "far worse off now, than formerly."<sup>54</sup> While they cower from their deeds behind their congratulatory masquerade as benefactors of progress, the merchants' reduction of man to commercial interactions reflected one of the worst sorts of de-humanizing acts perpetrated by civilized men. The missionaries' mask of piety shields them from the ineffectual result of their labors, or even worse, the harm that attends their well intentioned motives.

Melville's invectives were an elegant version of the sort of attacks being leveled in popular literature at the hypocrites. Satirical assaults against the claims of the

civilizing mission and against the mummery of its advocates were common. In the 1820s eighteenth-century satire of Western civilization experienced a revival in works like the English novelist James Mouer's sequel to his successful Adventures of Hajji Baba. His The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan in England (1828) was widely read in the United States and influenced the Orientalist writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne among others.<sup>55</sup> Like the domestic sensational novels that satirized reformers, writers like Maturin Murray Ballou, Henry Brent, Edgar Allen Poe, and John Deforest mocked Biblical archeologists, religious missionaries, and explorers. As the literary scholar Malini Johar Schueller has observed, while many writers of what he called "missionary-colonial novels" invoked formulaic themes involving racial/cultural inferiority and the civilizing mission, they frequently caricatured elements of the ideological presumptions that accompanied them.<sup>56</sup> Melville's mockery of missionaries and merchants in his South Sea adventures was part of broader suspicion of the civilizing impulse in evidence in many of the travel narratives of the day.

While we might expect examples of comic deflation in the works of marginalized Americans like the black traveler David F. Dorr, so perceptively identified the theme of domination in the 1851 London World's Fair, it is surprising when similar strategies appear in the writing of prosperous white travelers like Taylor. Surprising that is, until we understand this approach is part of their attempt to penetrate the moral ambiguity of their situation at home and come to a defensible understanding of their own behavior.

### **Embracing Desire and the New Ideal of Authenticity**

The writings of Melville, Hawthorne, and Taylor suggest they were inclined to believe that some of the greatest faults in their contemporaries surrounded the lies

associated with sentimentality and sincerity. Society seemed more concerned with sentimental, material, and moral reassurance than truth. “Let us be honest, if we cannot be ideal” Taylor would later write about his thoughts while standing on the peak of Oeta in Greece, “When a man always feels the proper emotion at the right place, suspect him!”<sup>57</sup> The root of these suspicions began with Taylor’s romantic turn in the early 1840s. However, they intensified after his moving to New York. Experiences there left him questioning the veracity of his own sentiment and sincerity. His attraction to the passions enflamed by the wide-open possibilities of the city left him feeling deeply confused. As his material ambitions and less than romantic desires got the best of him he became deeply troubled and developed a sense of self-loathing. In this atmosphere he began to turn on the very values that had sustained him before. To his second wife, Marie-Hansen Taylor, Taylor confided the opinion—formed around this period—that growing-up he had been “unfavorably influenced” by a “sentimentality which hindered his intellectual development, made him see men and facts as through a colored glass and held in check for a number of years his true self.” Eventually this was broken down “by his wandering into the world, by his contact with different peoples and countries.”<sup>58</sup> Among the Bedouin and peoples of the Indian subcontinent where Taylor believed he was exposed to fundamental or authentic nature of human impulses, he learned to abandon the sentimental ideology of innocence and accept that he too possessed these instinctual drives.

It was among the denizens of Phaff’s that Taylor first enjoyed the reassurance that eased the uncertainties of such a leap. Their decadence or bohemianism consisted, at least in part, of their willingness to recognize rather than shield themselves from their

participation in the sordid, material world of men. They had come to reject the mask of innocence and aesthetic transcendence prized by other artists.

Though there was rather a repellent absence of sentiment [among the inhabitants of Phaff's bar], there was at least, nothing of the mock article. Nobody attempted to play a part, knowing the absurdity of wearing a mask behind the curtain, and suspecting how soon it would be torn off, if attempted. Thus the conversation, if occasionally coarse, if unnecessarily profane, was scoffing and deprecating of much that I knew to be good and noble, was always lively, racy, and entertaining. I surmised that my associates were not the best of men; but then, on the other hand, they were not bores.<sup>59</sup>

This passage from John Godfrey's Fortune suggests the way the characters that inhabit "the cave" played a pivotal role in helping lift the scales that blinded Godfrey/Taylor to the hypocrisy of the world. Under the tutelage of the inhabitants of this dark lair his notion of personal innocence faded away. That shift both facilitated the sense of having "quite broken loose from my youthful moorings and [...] more or less adrift, both in faith and morals" and helped him find something other than the "negative virtue of habit" to tether his boat.<sup>60</sup>

Upon meeting Godfrey the wizened Brandagee/Willis instantly sized-up the young man. Here was one of the hayseed romantics that poured into the city, his mind cluttered with idealism and sentiments lifted from his readings, he guessed.

You believe in fame, in a sort of profane coming-down of the fiery tongues, don't you? You've been anointed, and shampooed, and brushed, and combed by some barbar-Apollo, for an elegant 'mission,' haven't you? And the unwashed and uncombed multitudes will turn up their noses and scent you afar off, and say to each other, 'Let us stand aside that The Poet may pass!'

Having had his fun, however, Brandagee turned serious and tried to set the young man straight: "but one can't live in the world and hold on to [these delusions of self and grand mission]." "The man who isn't afraid to look at the naked truth, under all this surface flummery, is the master," he advised him.<sup>61</sup> In Brandagee's lack of idealism and the

attitudes of other members of the “cave” young John had begun to confront the truth about the world and his own nature—just as Taylor had been forced to during his first years in New York. The inhabitants of the “cave” had begun to seek a way around the dilemma between their ideals and the reality of their lives as artists.

Taylor in early 1848 attended a “fancy dress ball,” that symbol of worldly ostentatiousness, as none other than “the character of Goethe’s Faust.”<sup>62</sup> Perhaps it was meant as a confession of his lost innocence, the death of one set of lofty artistic ideals for another less purified sense of his craft: one in which he admits to having thrown himself into the pursuit of the mundane rewards of the market. Taylor had taken a new identity as a Faustian hero. Whether his masquerade was a conscious commentary on this dilemma in his life or not, his subsequent life in New York and then in the contrasting experience of California opened Taylor’s imagination regarding the moral and natural state of human nature. In May of 1850 he wrote in his journal, “For the first time in my life I feel secure in my destiny.” All of those “vague instincts and groping passions,” he went on, were becoming clear. His ambivalence towards the pursuit of all but the more transcendent desires was dissipating. “Had I not been made to believe that passion was a sin,” he concluded, “I know my true nature now—and am empowered by it.”<sup>63</sup> Taylor’s victory over the narrow idealism of his youth was not as complete as he thought, however. The trials of the Lind affair and Mary’s death lay ahead to fuel a confused sense of self-reproach for not adhering to higher goals or conversely for not freeing himself from the “unnatural” restraint society imposed upon his primal nature. Following the terrible events of 1850 he concluded, “I have been a child and weakling long enough! let me be a man henceforth.” “Life now belongs to myself alone—I swear it shall have

play.”<sup>64</sup> By 1851 he began to inscribe these thoughts in an intellectual framework and give them public voice.

Before departing for Asia he lectured in several cities on what he called “Animal Man.” In this intriguing text Taylor crammed the intellectual and emotional confusion that had mushroomed under the pressures of the previous years. The most radical theme evident here is his suspicion of idealized notions of civilization and the materialism that he thought too often passed as progress. Man, he contended, has become disconnected from the concrete, “half-bestial,” side of his nature. “The Spirit has been pushed forward,” today, “by a thousand leaps of science, philosophy, popular instruction and moral zeal” to a point where the body has been neglected. As a result, the:

mind becomes a tyrant, and the body the slave—where the individual man lives in and for the Intellect, making his animal nature a mere vehicle for the convenience of existence. [...] Thus, the extreme of Civilization sometimes approaches the extreme of Barbarism[.] [...] Those who look at things as they really are, cannot fail to find much of this disproportion in the civilization of the present day, and most of all, in our own country.<sup>65</sup>

Later in the talk Taylor cautiously pressed forward in his attack, leaving little doubt about the general thrust of his argument: we have lost something in the advance of civilization, namely the strength and vitality of our savage ancestors.

Compared with the ancient races of the world, or even with the men of three or four centuries ago, the civilized nations of the present day show a marked decrease of the vital principle.

While is it true we live longer, he admitted, that is only because we live in a less dangerous world. “A hot-house plant, carefully tended,” he asserted, “may outlive a shrub on the mountain-side [...] but this could be attributed to no inherent vigor of its own.” Evidence of many types points, Taylor asserted, to the fact that “the average vigor and vital power of civilized Man is certainly not what it was.”<sup>66</sup> One need only look at

the number of patent medicine advertisements to know, he reasoned, that today we are afflicted by more diseases than in the past; knights during the Middle-Ages walked in armor that would crush the contemporary wearer; since we have never found surgical tools in the tombs of Egypt their builders had obviously not needed them; skulls in the collection of Louis Agassiz show that men 20,000 years ago had stronger teeth. The recovery of the animal vitality possessed by the ancestors of modern man would, it was obvious, lead to physical revitalization.<sup>67</sup>

Taylor's thoughts were further solidified during the journey that soon followed. One example of this blinkered outlook of bourgeois society for Taylor was the prudishness of middle-class tastes. During his journey in Scandinavia he bemoaned the effect this sort of censorship had come to have on travel narratives.

It is a pity that many traits which are really characteristic and interesting in a people cannot be mentioned on account of the morbid prudery prevalent in our day, which insults the unconscious innocence of nature. Oh, that one could imitate the honest unreserve of the old travelers!<sup>68</sup>

The denial of man's body seemed to him a distortion of nature. Elsewhere he attacked how the insistence upon civilized man's innocence prevented many from seeing "profound" truths about their own nature. One example he returned to in both his writings and lectures involved the Hindu worship of the Lingam, a phallic shaped symbol representing Shiva one of the primary gods of Hinduism.

There is a profound philosophical truth hidden under the singular forms of this worship, if men would divest themselves for a moment of prudery with regard to such subjects, which seems to be the affectation of the present age.<sup>69</sup>

To Taylor this "prudery" was in effect a refusal to recognize the role of primal instincts, both sexual and aggressive, in the make-up of civilized man.

Upon his return the fact that this repossession of the savage involved the rejection of “moral” purity became more evident in his private writing. In the summer of 1854 a little less than a year after his return, he began a journal that “shall be confessional.” He had lost his faith in the ideals to which he had so long dedicated his life and had come to appreciate the concreteness of primal passion, whether it was “a virtue or a sin.”

The weakness of our age is a fruitless chase after the Ideal. Men forget that the Ideal must spring from the Actual, as its base and permanent foundation. Our great ambition is to soar through the air, forgetting that we have no wings ...<sup>70</sup>

The path he had followed in the past was self-destructive, he had concluded. Like Godfrey, he had learned that the dreams upon which he had directed his life were nothing more than illusions. He must admit the sometimes ugly truth about the world and himself. To that end “I shall write in it the entire and faithful utterance of my soul, regardless whether [...] [they] exalt or debase my character as a man” he promised. Doing so would lead to a state of virtuous authenticity and grace.

I think I know what amount of good and evil is in me, and as I shall not withhold the good through self-modesty, or shall not withhold the evil through shame. I believe that there are in every man the germs of all the virtues and vices of Humanity. [...] Good and Evil are both inherent in Man, we are neither wholly defamed, “born in sin,” nor are we, as some enthusiasts would have us believe—wholly good by nature. We do good, for the love of doing good, even though we have not entered into that artificial “state of grace,” which bigots regard as essential to salvation, and we take evil to our arms, knowing it to be such. Let me not conceal my true nature from myself. My best happiness is in doing good, but I have done evil, and shall again do evil, with my eyes open [...] animal nature—which is no less God’s gift than the spiritual—asserts its claim, and forces us to minister to it.<sup>71</sup>

If the savage was no better than contemporary man, these critics implied, at least he was not hypocritical. Indeed within the Romantic critique it was primitive man’s lack of falseness—his absence of guilt in the midst of his sin—that was deemed a virtue for it revealed man’s true hidden nature. Here the intertwining streams of romantic and racial

theory of human development fostered a common belief that a primitive was but an early version of modern man. Correlative to that was the notion that deep within civilized man lurked the primal characteristics of the savage. At heart, below the patina of civilized behavior, in other words, modern man was himself still a savage. In an age that had become suspicious of the gap between ideals and practice, this primitive nature, for all its shortcomings, crudeness and immorality, appeared to have the virtue of being transparent and foundational.

Key to understanding these views is that at heart they were less about defending the Other than about attacking the notion that man could attain authenticity by holding to the restraints or slavishly following the values espoused by civilized society. The softening line between the civilized and the primitive was part of a shift in the popular understanding of human nature and what it took to attain authenticity. It signaled a growing acceptance of the complexity of the psyche, the role of irrationality within it, the recognition of divisions within the self, and a weakening belief in personal innocence.

At the most basic level, Taylor achieved this recognition of the irrationality of civilized man by frequently bringing his audience to see the connections they shared with the Other. Like the savage, they possessed divisions within them between virtue and desire. In the ambiguities of Taylor's statements about foreign peoples his audience could indirectly reflect upon their own divided consciousness. If the settings and adventures described in Taylor's travel writings drew readers into cathartic fulfillment of their own desires, then his more meditative observations on human nature took his audience a step further: they drew them into a guarded recognition of the primitive within themselves.

Changes in the notion of what constituted the authentic nature of man made this recognition possible. There was an increasing tendency across American culture at this time—thanks in part to the spreading belief in racial differences—to believe that man’s nature had to be considered in terms of a wider understanding and reference to the universe and his place in it. It had to be considered, that is, in reference to the new developmental theory of natural history and race. Due at least in part to this shift there was an emerging tendency to entertain a less genial understanding of man, to see humans as defined by racial instinct rather than reason. One consequence was a willingness to accept the belief that man’s authentic nature included primitive impulses.<sup>72</sup>

As these views spread, the problematic nature of the ideal of sincerity became apparent. “There is no deeper dissembler than the sincerest man,” Emerson pronounced in 1840.<sup>73</sup> Emerson wrote these words during a period of doubt and self-imposed isolation following the controversy surrounding the Divinity School Address.<sup>74</sup> In the wake of such critiques the notion of authenticity became separated-off: it was assumed to involve a more demanding process of self-discovery than recognized earlier within the discourse of sincerity.<sup>75</sup>

In part this involved a more ruthless rejection of hypocrisy, an artistic expression of which can be seen in Melville’s tale “Bartleby the Scribner.” In order to not be seduced by the lies that surrounded him, Bartleby gradually withdraws from the world, eventually dying. Foreign locations permit Melville to display hypocrisy in contrast. In his South Sea novels readers witness the self-serving myths of civilized man’s superiority. In Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter and The Marble Faun, setting is used to raise the same questions.

Both writers associated primal impulses like lust and aggression with authenticity. This shift excused primitivism as an inherent part of nature. When Melville wrote sympathetically of South Sea Islanders, or Taylor of the Bedouin, they were attempting to make the morally suspect behavior associated with these native peoples, comprehensible. Recognition of this authentic self represented a new form of virtue, one that might sustain those who felt uneasy regarding their participation in worldly affairs.

For the dark romantics the idea that the only true path to salvation, the only means to individual empowerment, lay in the embrace of the evil they professed to loathe was a major theme of their writing. It fit logically alongside their rejection of hypocrisy and the recognition of their own complicity in the sins of the world. This realization manifested itself in a fascination with Faustian themes in literary culture. As far as we can tell it was in the late 1840s that Taylor began what would become a lifelong fascination with the myth of Faust. During the next few years he translated sections of Goethe's version of the tale, a task he would return to in the late 1860s and complete in the early 1870s. The story of the retiring, frustrated scholar's contract with the devil and journey into the world in the hopes of finding meaning and happiness functioned as a metaphor of modern man's dilemma and the struggle of artists in particular.

Melville and Hawthorne, to give two prominent examples, employed the two myths of a bargain with evil and journey into nature in search for redemption. In Moby Dick Melville presents a fractured rendition of the Faustian tale. Both Ishmael and Ahab possess their own demons. For Ishmael the demon he weds is the wild, other worldly Ahab. The deranged passions of the captain represented a darker version of the burning

quest for understanding that initially led Ishmael to sea. In his heart he felt an uneasy identification with Ahab and his monomania.

I felt a sympathy and a sorrow for him, but for I don't know what, unless it was the cruel loss of his leg. And yet I also felt a strange awe for him; but that sort of awe, which I cannot at all describe, was not exactly awe; I do not know what it was. But I felt it; and it did not disincline me towards him.<sup>76</sup>

It is only through his partnership with Ahab that Ishmael was reborn, redeemed in the wake of the ship's sinking. Ahab's own demon was not the White Whale but the spectral Parsee Fedallah whom Ahab ferreted aboard and whose "gliding strangeness" haunted the captain wherever he went, goading him further on in his doomed quest.

At times, for the longest hours, without a single hail, they stood far parted in the starlight; Ahab in his scuttle, the Parsee by the main-mast; but still fixedly gazing upon each other; as if in the Parsee Ahab saw his forethrown shadow, in Ahab the Parsee his abandoned substance.<sup>77</sup>

Here too the influence of Ahab's darker side leads to his fatal deliverance. Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter offered another reinterpretation of the Faustian tale. To give only one strand of it here, it was the scholarly Dimmesdale's friendship with the demonic physician Roger Chillingworth that eventually produced Dimmesdale's salvation despite the malevolent "leaches'" intent to destroy the minister.

The upshot of each story was the need to compromise with ideals. The ideals with which each character begins may not be the sole or even the best source of happiness. In the Scarlet Letter we are left to wonder about the virtue of society's moral standards; perhaps it was the sinners who pursued their passions who knew best.<sup>78</sup>

Melville was less ambivalent than Hawthorne. Starbuck's adherence to his rigid morality, his claim of spotless innocence, was clearly the reason he was unable to sway Ahab from his mission, or permit him to kill the lunatic, and thereby save the crew. More

subtle of mind, Ishmael learns the lesson that Starbuck does not: “in all cases man must eventually lower, or at least shift his conceit of attainable felicity;” he must not stare “too long in the face of the fire” or dream “with thy hand on the helm!”<sup>79</sup>

Both writers offered symbols of the superiority of this compromise in the happy unions between the innocence and corruption, and civilization and savagery that occur in their stories. In Moby Dick it was the partnership of Ishmael and Queequeg. The love of the cannibal restores Ishmael’s faith in man. “No more my splintered heart and maddened hand were turned against the wolfish world,” Ishmael tells us. “This soothing savage had redeemed it.”<sup>80</sup> Hawthorne offers us a different sort of symbolic compromise, when we were prompted to look back upon the union between Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne in the wild forest and see it not as sin but a different sort of virtuous act. This was a conclusion that might again be drawn from his story of pagan sexuality “The May-Pole of Merry Mount,” or that Hawthorne drew his readers to see in The Marble Faun where Donatello’s fall from innocence, as R. W. B. Lewis pointed out in The American Adam, “was in many serious respects an upward step—an entrance into that true reality” of the present.<sup>81</sup> Whether or not audiences recognized Donatello’s imprisonment as a sign of improvement, few readers doubted that the two Americans of the story, Kenyon and Hilda, return home wiser having abandoned the universal claims of innocence and corruption that they had carried with them to Europe. They had learned the virtue of the union of primitive with the civilized. Hawthorne intended that union to be symbolized in the central figure of story, the Faun: that “amiable and sensual creature” whose “very lack of moral severity,” but whose “coarser, animal portion of his nature might eventually

be thrown into the background.” This is what made the Faun “neither man nor animal, and yet no monster, but a being in whom both races meet, on friendly ground!”<sup>82</sup>

In these examples we see that to illustrate their theme that this darker nature inhabited all men, writers like Melville and Hawthorne turned to the extremities of the so-called civilized world. There along the mytho-poetic borders between innocence/corruption, the very geography they were attempting to complicate, their audiences’ recognition of the symbolism of that place more easily permitted them to fashion the tortured dramas in which men came to understand their own partnership with evil and achieve what redemption lay open to them. At the same time, in a testament to how closely space and time were wed in their imagination, the elemental symbolism of the vast, savage mysteriousness of the ocean and forest, melded easily with the landscape of history in other works like The Marble Faun, Billy Budd, and Clarel.

The redemptive message these writers fashioned from these Faustian themes bore some pertinence to their own struggles as artists trying to survive in a market economy. They accepted as a necessity the need to compromise with their former ideas of artistic purity. But this step was their partnership with the forces of demonic corruption. The Faustian tale turned the story of defeat into one of renewal. That is, some of them came to believe that by engaging in the market they would in fact attain a higher form of authentic self expression. Whatever the truth of the matter, the story eased their sense of self-loathing over succumbing to the fear of poverty and the lust for fame, money, and power.

For him and others this compromise seemed a means to readjust ideals to match realities. By breaking down the pretense that modern man was motivated solely by the

pursuit of higher ideals, Taylor opened the way to accepting the existence of the self-interested impulses that actually motivated civilized men. Dissolving the savage and civilized dichotomy allowed those who felt conflicted between their values and behavior to redefine natural self-interest and passion as acceptable. In short, to Taylor and others this involved an acknowledgement by civilized man of his own primitive heart. This self-criticism was only a step towards a larger aim. They then turned this admitted flaw into a virtue. The pursuit of the truth about their own sins was interpreted as part of a higher quest to attain a stricter sense of self truth or authenticity: of a higher ideal of personal transparency so favored by genteel sentimentalism. Accepting the primitive impulses of self-interest, physical passions or ambition as natural permitted the attainment of a higher degree of authenticity.

It remains an open question whether cultural leaders like Taylor interested his audience to look beyond the dualism of good and evil, and instead aspire to achieve what his fellow intellectuals conceived of as a more authentic sense of self. For that matter, it is not at all certain whether many among the mid-nineteenth century bourgeoisie were conscious of such a need. I would suggest, however, that in the tensions between gentility and commerce there exists evidence of a much broader discontent that might have served as the source for the origin of deeper questions: after all, where doubts existed many wanted to find a reason to believe that their own self-interested pursuits were natural, necessary, and even respectable.

Perhaps this can be seen in the life of men like James Cooley Fletcher, the first son of the Indianapolis businessman Calvin Fletcher. James evinced a subtle discontent with his options. Though trained as a missionary and with ample opportunity to settle

into a pastorate after his return from Brazil, James drifted instead, sustaining himself by lecturing and the occasional sermon. His condition brought a rift with his hard driving, practical father. James' decisions suggest an inability to commit himself to the religious, commercial or educational options that were certainly available to him. Instead he returned again and again to his fascination with foreign lands.<sup>83</sup>

### **Conclusion**

These possibilities give rise to a few speculations regarding the popularity Taylor achieved as a writer and lecturer: speculations that set the stage for the following chapter. One explanation for Taylor's success at the time may lay in the way he was better able than the dark romantics to fulfill the nascent desire among his audience for a sense of authenticity. That is, Taylor's use of the metaphoric journey of self-discovery satisfied a need felt by his audience to ease their growing discontent between genteel ideals and the moral ambiguities that actually surrounded their lives.

As early as mid-way through the nineteenth-century at least some, like the writers discussed here, felt uneasy with the emerging moral dilemmas between their values and emerging place in the market society. They were also sensitive to the role of mass-production technologies, and the proliferation of forms of cultural mediation between the individual and larger society, had already begun to produce an impression that man was becoming distanced from the underlying fabric of the universe. The extent to which civilized man thought he must go in order to escape the accumulating density of modern life (reality of money, trade, social competition) became more exacting than earlier proponents of sincerity. For the writers of the American Renaissance the idea of authenticity, the discovery of immutable or foundational realities, offered an anchor in a

time when other basis of identity had become uncertain. Belief in authenticity, in other words, held out the hope that people might reconnect with what they imagined was the underlying reality of their nature.

The effectiveness of this response was mixed. The compromise they pursued relied upon the acceptance of a fundamentally ambiguous image of man: one driven by the vibrant, irrational passions of his savage but true nature, yet at the same time, guided by a transcendent aim of authenticity. Struggle as they did the principle figures of the American Renaissance could not shake the sense that they were both part and apart of the world: of feeling that they were both superior to and at one with the unwashed masses devoted to the tawdry pursuit of gain and gratification.

Emerson and Thoreau's for instance, clung to a fairly conventional romantic notion that man was at his most authentic when he was apart and morally independent from the bustling of what passed as civilized society. For them the notion of authenticity fit into a larger moral plan. Like others Emerson and Thoreau were disturbed by what they saw as the inability of traditional notions of virtue to cope with the possibilities of modern life. They attempted to craft a philosophy of responsibility that might replace the traditions that no longer worked. Both Emerson and Thoreau stressed the idea that from this compromise a new kind of man might emerge who builds a greater morality out of the realization of his freedom. In short, like Melville, Hawthorne and Poe they were interested in fashioning a new basis of personal virtue that depended upon a more rigorous assumption of individual responsibility. And yet their solution involved an intense emphasis upon individual self-control versus acceptance of human passion. This put Emerson and Thoreau at odds with many in society who wished, or at least felt

compelled, to embrace the opportunities afforded by the market. On top of this, for many the complexity of their ideas made them difficult to follow. In the long run, Emerson and Thoreau's de-emphasis of worldly matters intrigued audiences yet left their philosophies appearing remote, ethereal, and ultimately too demanding for bourgeois Americans.

Later in life even Emerson held this lack of social ambition against his friend Thoreau.

[W]ith his energy and practical ability he seemed born, for great enterprise and for command; and I so much regret the loss of his rare powers of action, that I cannot help counting it a fault in him that he had no ambition. Wanting this, instead of engineering for all America, he was the captain of a huckleberry-party.<sup>84</sup>

In contrast, Melville, Hawthorne, and Poe fell back upon a more tragic withdrawal into the self. They envisioned man's role in this new world as a burden. This approach placed a different sort of demand upon their contemporaries. The troubled, less optimistic vision of the world evident in their writings challenged readers to accept that the conflict between their savage and civilized selves could never be entirely resolved. It was perhaps the persistence of the Calvinist doctrine of original sin in both Melville and Hawthorne that left them believing that man's flaws were a tragic fact that must simply be accepted. This darker vision of the human condition put these authors at odds with the optimistic belief in the perfectibility of man that so appealed to their fellow bourgeois Americans.<sup>85</sup>

All of this takes us a step closer to understanding the extraordinary popularity of Taylor. I would suggest that at mid-century these questions had already begun to impact the lives of bourgeois Americans. Most however were unable to accept the intense intellectual introspective morality of Emerson and Thoreau, nor inclined to the tragic heroism of Hawthorne and Melville. Instead they found in Taylor a more facile compromise between ideals and reality. Although it lacked depth and intellectual rigor,

the attitude Taylor projected regarding these matters possessed an evasiveness that permitted him and others to sustain a comforting degree of personal hypocrisy.

Perhaps the best way to capture how this evasive stance endeared Taylor to audiences would be to return again to how it was linked to the shifting notions of manliness. David Leverenz has argued that Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne and Melville attempted to reestablish manliness by alienating audiences.<sup>86</sup> In his lectures and prose writings Taylor did not attempt to shore-up his masculinity by assuming a radically obscure literary style. Taylor took another direction, one more closely akin to the position assumed by the majority of bourgeois Americans. His uncomplicated stylistic form, less rigorous intellectual approach yielded a shallow facility: an evasiveness that permitted him to shift easily between terms of cold, rational, manly self-control, and irrepressible spontaneous vitality of primitive manliness. In so doing audiences endorsed an idea of masculinity that permitted them to accept their own worldly endeavors. I will pursue this argument more concretely in the following chapter. This loose union satisfied the complex needs of his audience to maintain a sense of transcendent meaningfulness and yet simultaneously proceed securely in their worldly pursuits of material, social, and private interests.

In the next chapter, I will show how in Taylor they could find reconciliation for their alienated feelings in the superficial man of authenticity: the conquering hero or man of force. This better matched their notion of the unbounded, enterprising, and active hero: the sort of figure who combined the bourgeoisie's refined sense of self with the need to come to terms with the often rough game of market competition, pursuit of material wealth, and pleasures of consumption that surrounded them.

- <sup>1</sup> Thoreau, for one, felt the need to listen to the advice of Horace Greeley on how to succeed with audiences. Nevertheless he resented what he had to do, perceiving it as beneath his art and himself. When Taylor, then the editor of the Union Magazine, was asked by Greeley to help Thoreau he had his offer to publish a piece thrown in his face because of the minor changes requested. Michael T. Gilmore, American Romanticism and the Marketplace (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 10.
- <sup>2</sup> Melville to Evert A. Duyckinck, 12 February 1851, The Letters of Herman Melville, ed. Merrell R. Davis and William H. Gilman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 121.
- <sup>3</sup> Melville to Lemuel Shaw, 6 October 1849, Letters of Herman Melville, 91-92.
- <sup>4</sup> Bayard Taylor to James T. Field, late 1846, Box 5, Bayard Taylor Papers [hereafter cited as BTP], Cornell University Special Collections [hereafter cited as CUSC], Ithaca, NY.
- <sup>5</sup> Bayard Taylor, "Diary 1847-1850," 7 July 1847, item 44, Box 9, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>6</sup> Taylor to John B. Phillips, 3 August 1848, Box 6, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>7</sup> Reynolds, Beneath, 86.
- <sup>8</sup> Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune: Related by Himself, A Story of American Life (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1864), 289.
- <sup>9</sup> Taylor, At Home and Abroad, 1<sup>st</sup> series (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1859), 1:450.
- <sup>10</sup> Taylor to John B. Phillips, 11 September 1848, Box 6, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>11</sup> Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune, 273.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.
- <sup>16</sup> Taylor to George Boker, 29 March 1849, Marie Hansen-Taylor and Horace E. Scudder, Life and Letters of Bayard Taylor, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1884), 146.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 190-191.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 289-290.
- <sup>21</sup> Taylor's "Diary 1847-50," 4 September 1850, item 44, Box 9, BTP, CUSC. See Stoddard's account of conversation in Marie Hansen-Taylor Life and Letters, 1:183-4. Also see
- <sup>22</sup> Taylor to George Boker, 19 September 1850, Box 5, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>23</sup> Taylor to James T. Field, 17 September 1850, Box 6, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>24</sup> Taylor to R. H. Stoddard, 19 November 1850, Bayard Taylor Collection, Special Collections, State University of Pennsylvania, College City, Pennsylvania [hereafter cited as PSSC]
- <sup>25</sup> Taylor to George Boker, 19 September 1850, Box 5, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>26</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 27 September 1850, Box 5, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>27</sup> For a brief discussion of exotic shows see John Kuo Wei Tchen, New York before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 97. Also see Robert G. Lee, Orientalism: Asian Americans in Popular Culture (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 35.
- <sup>28</sup> The correspondence between Taylor and Barnum can be found among the letters of the BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>29</sup> Taylor, "Diary 1847-1850," 4 September 1850, item 44, Box 9, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>30</sup> Taylor to George Boker, 30 June 50, Box 5, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>31</sup> Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune, 284.
- <sup>32</sup> Taylor to George Boker, 1 May 51, Box 5, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>33</sup> Taylor to James Russell Lowell, 13 January 1855, File 742, Series I, James Russell Lowell Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard College Library, Harvard University, Cambridge Massachusetts [hereafter cited as HL].
- <sup>34</sup> R. W. B. Lewis, The American Adam (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 25.
- <sup>35</sup> David Reynolds, Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville (Cambridge, Mass.: University of Harvard Press, 1988), 194.
- <sup>36</sup> Nathaniel Hawthorne, The American Notebooks, ed. Claude M. Simpson, vol. 8, of The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1973), 29.
- <sup>37</sup> Edgar Allen Poe, Arthur Gordon Pym, Benita, Cereno and Related Writings, ed. John Seelye (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1967), 17, 26.

- 
- <sup>38</sup> Herman Melville, Moby Dick; or, the Whale (New York: Harper, 1851), 3.
- <sup>39</sup> Thoreau's comments can be found in a fragment of one of his journals held at the Huntington Library. Quoted in John Aldrich Christie, Thoreau as World Traveler (Columbia University Press: New York, 1965), 223.
- <sup>40</sup> R. W. Emerson, William H. Gillman et al. (eds.), The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson, 12 vols. [to date] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961-), 7:421-22.
- <sup>41</sup> Melville, Typee: A Romance of the South Sea (London: Folio Press, 1974), 167.
- <sup>42</sup> Melville, Redburn, his first voyage. Being the sailor-boy confessions and reminiscences of the son-of-a-gentleman in the merchant service (New York: Harper & brothers, 1850), 256.
- <sup>43</sup> David Mead, Yankee Eloquence in the Middle West: The Ohio Lyceum, 1850-1870 (Westport, Conn.; Greenwood Press, 1977), 117.
- <sup>44</sup> Toledo (Ohio) Blade, 20 March 1854.
- <sup>45</sup> Taylor, "The Philosophy of Travel," 3, Lecture Box, Bayard Taylor Collection [hereafter cited as BTC], Chester County Historical Society [hereafter cited as CCHS].
- <sup>46</sup> Quoted in Reynolds, Beneath the American Renaissance, 99.
- <sup>47</sup> Melville, Moby Dick, 56.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.
- <sup>49</sup> Herman Melville, Typee, 32.
- <sup>50</sup> Herman Melville, Mardi and a Voyage Thither (New Haven, Conn.: College University Press, 1973), 132.
- <sup>51</sup> Quoted in James E. Miller, Jr., A Reader's Guide to Herman Melville (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1990 [1962]), 82.
- <sup>52</sup> Melville, Moby Dick, 62.
- <sup>53</sup> Quoted in Lewis, The American Adam, 23.
- <sup>54</sup> Melville, Omoo: a narrative of adventures in the South Seas (New York: Harper & brothers, 1868), 240.
- <sup>55</sup> Luther S. Luedtke, Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Romance of the Orient (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), 51.
- <sup>56</sup> Malini Johar Schueller, U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790-1890 (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 80.
- <sup>57</sup> Bayard Taylor, Travels in Greece and Russia with and Excursion to Crete (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1859), 238.
- <sup>58</sup> Bayard Taylor, notebook, Box 7, Bayard Taylor Papers, HL.
- <sup>59</sup> Taylor, John Godfrey's Fortune, 284.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.
- <sup>62</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 1 January 1848, Box 5, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>63</sup> Taylor, "Diary 1847-50," 6 May 1850, item 44, Box 9, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 December 1850.
- <sup>65</sup> Taylor, "Animal Man," Lecture Box, CCHS, 4.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-21.
- <sup>68</sup> Taylor, Northern Travels: Summer and Winter Pictures of Sweden, Denmark, and Lapland (New York: Putnam, 1855), 152.
- <sup>69</sup> Taylor, A Visit to India, China, and Japan in the Year 1853 (New York: G. P. Putnam & Co., 1855), 247.
- <sup>70</sup> "Diary of 1854 and Greece," item 52, Box 8, BTP, CUSC, op cite.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>72</sup> Lionel Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972)
- <sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 119
- <sup>74</sup> For a discussion of this period in Emerson life see Mary Kupiec Cayton, Emerson: Self and Society in the Transformation of New England, 1800-1845 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 188-191.
- <sup>75</sup> Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity.
- <sup>76</sup> Melville, Moby Dick, 90.
- <sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 590-1.

---

<sup>78</sup> Lewis, American Adam, 112.

<sup>79</sup> Melville, Moby Dick, 464.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>81</sup> Lewis, American Adam, 126.

<sup>82</sup> Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Marble Faun: or, The Romance of Monte Beni (New York: Penguin, 1990), 9-10.

<sup>83</sup> For an example of the rift that developed between Calvin Fletcher and his eldest son see example in Calvin Fletcher's diaries, The Diary of Calvin Fletcher: Including Letters to and from Calved Fletcher, 9 vols., eds. Gayle Thornbrough and Paula Corpuz (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1983), especially vol. 6:xi-xii, and 7:vx.

<sup>84</sup> "Thoreau," R. W. Emerson, Atlantic Monthly 10 (August 1862): 239-249, 248.

<sup>85</sup> For a discussion of their Calvinism see James D. Wilson, The Romantic Heroic Ideal (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 82-83.

<sup>86</sup> David Levernz, Manhood and American Renaissance (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 228.

## Chapter 8

### **Celebrating Personality: Harnessing the Primitive Impulse**

In the previous discussion of sensationalism and the role of exoticism in the consumer market I argued that after the middle of the century many were being forced to deal with both the intensification of desires and the capacity to indulge them. Finding some way to accept these impulses, thus elevating the conflict, became important. The authors of the American Renaissance sought to recalibrate the moral landscape, I asserted, by looking more critically at themselves and exposing the hypocrisies of bourgeois assumptions regarding the self that dominated the earlier half of the century. They sought to penetrate what they perceived as the delusions common among their countrymen and achieve higher state of moral transparency that they termed authenticity. Contemporaneous with these developments, I argue here, was a broader shift in bourgeois masculine identity. There was an increasing effort to refashion manhood in a way that celebrated the will to power, the use of aggression, uncompromising self-interest, and cunning. Men such as the showman P. T. Barnum and the ruthless railroad financier Jay Gould, were examples of the celebration of guile and force. Taylor was another.

Like many of his contemporaries Taylor's attitudes towards the legitimacy of the pursuit of worldly success as well as of emotional fulfillment adjusted slowly to meet the possibilities and needs of the self-interested society emerging around him. Burdened by the belief that artists should remain aloof from the mundane and corrupting influences of the market, Taylor experienced a more painful, existentially fraught transition than most of his contemporaries. And yet in a fashion similar to his fellow artists, Taylor managed—at least partially—to re-imagine the nature of art (Taylor's self described

profession) to fit more comfortably the realities of making his way in the world. This adjustment was analogous to one faced by the broader swath of bourgeois Americans. For Taylor and others this adjustment involved the acceptance and then incorporation of individual passions as a natural, even beneficial, part in the fulfillment of man's potential. In this regard, the image that had formed around Taylor after his return from Asia made him a valuable figure in mediating this dilemma. In the eyes of many, Taylor's experience as a man of the world meant he was unconstrained by overly exacting moral conventions. Coupled with his success, he became a figure in whom some bourgeois Americans felt they could invest their passions and then use his resulting celebrity stature as approval of their secret longings.

Where this came together most clearly was in the notion of personality. Personality was increasingly accepted as simply an external means for the fulfillment of one's inner, authentic self. This was perhaps the inevitable conclusion to the transformation of the romantic subjectivity into a commodity hinted at earlier. Yet it all depended upon a more complex, layered, and ultimately ambiguous understanding of the human psyche which manifested itself in the bourgeois imaginary of the Other. His emergence as a public celebrity reflected the public's growing admiration of men who by force of their personality were seen as having bent the world to their will. The continued importance of gentility placed a limit upon the appeal of the cruder examples like Barnum and Gould. Taylor, however, was among those who appeared to embody a middle way, a masculinity that combined both power and finesse.

After the early 1850s, the cathartic possibilities of exotic landscapes, people, and travel, not only provided an outlet for Taylor's personal desires but convinced him that

the public Taylor represented the better sort of this new man of action. Indeed the popular fascination with both the erotic and violent possibilities of the foreign came together most noticeably in the public response to Taylor himself. In his absence while traveling in the Middle East and Asia people across the nation had evidenced a feverish interest in the exotic world travels of the intrepid journalist. For nearly two and half years his letters had been featured in both and daily and weekly Tribune editions and reached hundreds of thousands across the nation. As Taylor told his mother, “The Tribune comes next to the Bible all through the West.”<sup>1</sup> In truth, however, Taylor’s letters to the Tribune were a major reason, as one of the paper’s editors told him, for the paper’s success.<sup>2</sup> Fans wrote the paper’s office asking questions about its reporter. Where would he go next? What were his intentions? Was it true he was attempting to find the source of the Blue Nile? Had he become lost in equatorial Africa? How could they send letters to him? One farmer drove his wagon twenty miles in a winter storm to borrow the most recent copy of the Weekly Tribune so that his sick wife could read of the young man’s recent exploits.<sup>3</sup> Taylor’s friend James T. Field wrote him, “I see at every railroad station your books selling to travelers daily. Come and taste your fame at my side, dear Bayard.”<sup>4</sup> By the time Taylor boarded the ship for home his adventures had become a national obsession.<sup>5</sup>

In late December of 1853 when Taylor returned from his journey around the world he discovered that the popularity of his recent letters had eclipsed anything attained by his earlier correspondence. Hundreds of requests came from all over the nation asking him to speak: from the most respected lecture series of metropolitan centers like Boston to small towns in rural Ohio or distant California. They all promised he would be

heartily received. And he was. Writing to his mother from Corning, New York he explained:

The houses are crowded, and people come here, fifteen and twenty miles, to hear me. I find that everybody, literally everybody, has read my letters, and knows me already. Such introductions as I must go through with! I am stared at and pointed at as if I were the great Gyaskutos itself.<sup>6</sup>

We are left to ponder the reasons for his newfound fame. As Taylor suggests here it had a great deal to do with the exoticism with which his fellow countrymen now looked upon him. Taylor's efforts in his letters to link himself in spirit to the exotic peoples and lands he visited had proven a success.

His new fame was both qualitatively as well as quantitatively different from before. The most unusual dimension of his celebrity was the intensity of the feelings directed towards him. The aggressive and sexual tone of the emotions expressed by some suggests that Americans were displacing their illicit desires into their feelings for Taylor himself. In their adulation of Taylor one could speculate that, as in the response to other exotic figures during this period, the public was evidently seeking a substitute for the direct and less acceptable expression of passion.

Rather than rejecting these efforts by others to use him, Taylor self-consciously embraced them and transformed the willingness of others to celebrate him into a means for the realization of his own material ambitions. This meant he had to accommodate his ethereal romantic aspirations to his earthly desires. Like Barnum before him, he transformed the public perception into an instrument for the fulfillment of his own needs through the manipulation of his personality or his public self. In this way by the early 1850s Taylor had begun not only to resolve in his own way the confusion between his

ideals and his impulse to betray those ideals, but to embody a newly emerging notion of bourgeois masculinity.

### **Mesmeric Travel, Harnessing the Power of the Unconscious**

Early in the first half of the nineteenth-century the characteristic feature of the popular hero was a man driven by overpowering passions and possessed of almost boundless energy. His defining trait was an uncompromising nature when it came to the fulfillment of his ambitions. The ruthlessness and monomania of men like Napoleon were, it was concluded, part of their genius and the reason for their success. Victorians often demurred at the lack of civility in men like Napoleon, yet their admiration for such “larger than life” men imparted an unmistakable indication of the rising appreciation for power and force. In the 1830s after the emergence of sensationalist literature, for instance, the pallid noble primitivism of Cooper’s semi-civilized backwoods hero Leatherstocking gave ground to the outlandish savagery of frontier heroes like Davy Crockett. Described as half-man and half-beast in the numerous accounts that comprised the Crockett myth, this hero of the primal forest was an unstoppable, elemental force, whose acts of murderous mayhem, cannibalism, and sadistic revelry exemplified the trend towards the rejection of civility and the embrace of irrational qualities as a necessary dimension of American manhood.<sup>7</sup>

In its transfiguration of the American male into a savage beast the Crockett myth represented a trend evident throughout the Victorian lore of heroism. As a young man Taylor learned to believe that the vitality of an individual lay deep within, in the irrational passions of primal nature. The nineteenth-century “success literature” that he read was home to an alternate tradition of shrewd and morally flexible men who defied the rigidly

drawn definition of character seen in the classic self-made man. Part the product of sensationalist literature and part the creation of satirists like Charles F. Briggs and later by Mark Twain, amoral types such as the enterprising Yankee, urban man on the make, or shrewd rural upstart, deflated the naïve notions of success and simple moral calculus fed to the public by some. The archetypal heroes Taylor had grown to respect, like Byron and Napoleon, were recognized as flawed men. They were nonetheless admired. Pursuing their ambitions without regard to petty moral strictures, heedless of social opinion, they achieved a sort of tragic nobility in the pursuit of their passions even if it was not strictly virtuous.<sup>8</sup>

The events of the Civil War further spurred the celebration of aggression and power as positive, even noble, manly instincts. Didactic guides after the 1840s adopted the message implicit to mesmerism and adventure travel literature that emphasized the importance of harnessing man's primal nature in order to achieve success. Young men were increasingly advised by elite men, like Thomas Wentworth Higginson, to imitate the impulsive muscular verve of the primitive in order to better fit themselves for the challenges of modern society.<sup>9</sup>

Visions of the hero as a paragon of traditional virtue were challenged by a more pragmatic and compelling counter-narrative that accepted man's mixed nature. The hero was recognized for containing the selfishness and lusts implicit to his internal or primitive origin—the qualities of the barbarian recommended in the advice literature. Similarly the Anglo-Saxon and later the Scandinavian barbarian racists adored as the progenitors of the white man's greatness were not admired for their moral virtues. Few doubted that these rough hewn men were morally superior to the degenerate colored

peoples of the present. Still, they were also not quite up to the standards of the early nineteenth-century. Rather it was the barbarian's physical power and lack of civility that excited them. By drawing upon this dark core of savage vitality, and the primitive impulses that lay inside them, these men had mastered the world.

Long before Freud and his followers articulated a theory of depth psychology in the late-nineteenth century, the influence of romanticism had led to an exploration of the notion of the unconscious. Suggestions of the unconscious appear throughout literature at mid-century especially in the dark sensationalist style of the era. Allusions to an internal journey into man's psyche and towards the source of individual vitality were not uncommon in American medical literature. And in popular culture there was interest in the story of internal discovery and the release of hidden primal energy.

One catalyst for this had been the rise of man's geographic consciousness. Another was the association of history with space and human difference. A third revolved about the metaphoric use of travel narratives to suggest mental journeys. In the mid-nineteenth century when many saw the geography of human diversity as a reflection of man's historical development—an example of the multi-layered complexity of consciousness itself—it was only a small step for them to imagine travel as a correlative journey into the inner recesses of oneself and the rediscovery of one's own primitive nature. Since the voyage outward signifies a simultaneous journey inward in which the hero discovers his vital authentic self, the hero's return then marks the end of his alienation (psychological exile) from the material world and history. The end thus signifies a new beginning (rebirth).

Intellectuals at mid-century were extraordinarily fond of the dense psychological symbolism possible with travel motifs. To them the voyage into the world was very much like a journey into man's dark unknown heart. "Is not the midnight like Central Africa?" Thoreau puzzled in a journal from 1852.

Are we not tempted to explore it, to penetrate to the shores of Lake Schad, to discover the sources of the Nile, perchance in the Mountains of the Moon? Who knows what fertility, what beauty in the animal and vegetable kingdom are there to be found, what primeval simplicity and reflection of truth among its dusky inhabitants?<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps this was what drew Taylor down the Nile to its origin. For him it symbolized the discovery of the unconscious self.

Although the concept of a human unconscious floated through mid-nineteenth century culture, Freud had yet to give it psychoanalytic form. But the unconscious did have an impact on the popular imagination in the alternate guise of animal magnetism. In the years after the "professor of animal magnetism" Charles Poyen introduced Americans to the theories of Franz Anton Mesmer in 1836, a craze for "mesmerism" swept the United States. Mesmer believed that an invisible fluid permeated the universe and linked all the natural, and supernatural, forces known to man. Americans were eager for a holistic theory that would bind the spiritual, inner, subjective nature of man with the material, external, objective reality of the world. They hoped for a theory that would tie all experience to a single animating force. Americans were attracted to mesmerism as a way to erase the divide separating their belief in both religious and scientific explanations of the world.

Yet it was as a therapeutic philosophy and then as an instrumental device of self-help that mesmerism gathered its biggest audience. Deep in the wells of the individual,

mesmerists suggested, lay an “animal” power, understood by Mesmer and others in terms of the still mysterious force of electricity. From this internal source sprang personal vitality. As a point of physical health one needed only to tap that hidden reserve, this unconscious or deeply buried pool of primal energy, to cure the problems of the body.

Taylor had become fascinated with the power of electrical energy as early as 1837 when he completed an essay for school on the scientific discovery and theories of electrical force and magnetic attraction.<sup>11</sup> Signs of his interest in animal magnetism appeared in 1840 when he attained books on the subject. By then he had already become familiar with the work of Orson and Lorenzo Fowler, perhaps the two most successful sponsors of mesmerism in the nation.<sup>12</sup> More than likely Taylor had been introduced to the topic earlier by one of the thousands of lecturers traveling through the country during these years. Mesmerism meant many things to many people, but for Taylor, like others, it illustrated the overlap between spatial, temporal, and spiritual geography. To him it confirmed the connection between man’s unconscious and savagery.<sup>13</sup>

Mesmeric cures involved an act of both a vertical voyage into the spiritual interior of one’s psyche and also a horizontal journey outward through the physical world. Practitioners commonly placed themselves, their picked mediums, or subjects from audiences into trance states out of which one traveled through space and time, and in and out of corporal forms. Andrew Jackson Davis, a cobbler turned famed mesmeric medium, termed this “traveling clairvoyance.” Later in life Taylor repeatedly described examples of his own “clairvoyant travel” that would give him “magnetic impressions” of events taking place at home while he traveled in distant parts of the world.<sup>14</sup>

The mental travelers might meet historical figures, visit ancient exotic lands, and acquire mystical knowledge. Along the way these mental travelers reconnected with the unconscious, release the healing powers of the vital energy residing deep inside and rid the body of disease.<sup>15</sup> Indeed the impact of mesmeric travel was thought to have much the same qualities as that of actual travel. Asked one writer of popular novels, “Who doubts animal magnetism? Let him who does, recall the thrill that ran through his frame at receiving the cordial grasp with which a friend welcomed him back, after long wanderings, to his native land.”<sup>16</sup> It was believed the abundant heat or energy of such places revitalized the weakened body. Before leaving for California in 1849, for instance, Taylor hoped he would be able to tap the “vital electricity of [its] solstitial heat” to cure his nagging respiratory ailment.<sup>17</sup> Nothing, Taylor later said, was capable of producing “such a powerful change” upon a person than the revitalizing powers of travel into the charged landscape of primitive lands.<sup>18</sup> It was the assumed interconnection of time and space, as well as the spiritual and material universe that made it possible for mesmerists to believe they could travel, in different states of consciousness, and release the untapped reserves of natural energy.

Some readers of Taylor’s own travel writing found his writing had a salubrious effect upon their health. Susan Arnold Wallace—the wife of Lew Wallace the politician, diplomat, and author of exotic romances such as The Fair God (1873) and Ben Hur (1880)—credited Taylor’s writing with helping to revive her health. Like her husband, Susan Wallace held a powerful fascination with other lands and peoples. She eventually authored travel books on Europe, Egypt, the Near East and New Mexico. In her first,

written in 1872, she explained that while “just recovering from a severe illness [...] a kind friend sent me the complete set” of Taylor’s green and gold covered travel writings.

When they were all laid on my bed, I felt that I was literally lying down in green pastures. I was not supposed to have the strength to more than amuse myself for an hour or two with reading; but stimulated to the undertaking by an indomitable passion for pictures of travel, and finding them glowing with the hues afforded by a rich imagination, there was no limit to my enjoyment till I arrived at the last page of the last volume.

Afterward, the memory of them aided her again when another “crisis in her life” forced her to “face the world alone and resolve bravely to meet all exigencies of fate or fortune, or succumb to a crushing sorrow, and, with paralyzed energies, prove a sorry burden[.]” Instead “in the Old World, away from all reminding sympathy, I conquered myself, and returned home with materials for work[.]”<sup>19</sup>

What was the source of these powers? The trance state which the mesmerist used to send subjects on these voyages was thought to anesthetize the tendency of civilized man to control his deeper desires and as a result release the primitive that lay within. “We are conscious of an animal in us,” Thoreau wrote, “which awakens in proportion as our higher nature slumbers.”<sup>20</sup> Its effect paralleled the disorienting escape and submersion in another culture produced by actual travel. Thus it inhibited influence of the Ego, that higher faculty of the civilized man that represses his primal nature. As Taylor said “the conscience falls asleep on the Nile.”<sup>21</sup> The opening allowed an individual’s primal nature, their authentic selves, to gain expression.

Yet the capacity to cure illness was only one way in which mesmerism and its link to the image of Otherness fit into the self-help culture of nineteenth century. Many thought this unconscious primal energy could be harnessed in other ways. Frequently mesmerists were thought, for instance, to facilitate the cure of diseases by drawing upon

their extraordinary capacity to control the magnetic fluid connecting all things. They would then focus what amounts to their personal vitality to help the victim. Mesmer's theoretical magnetic fluid leapt to the fore of the popular explanation for the mysterious force emanating from deep within that connected one with other people. No one doubted, as one popular author at the time said, "There are certain affinities in human bosoms, certain influences which seem to operate imperceptibly by attraction as the magnet impels the metal, and draws kindred spirits into contact and communion."<sup>22</sup> But the existence of this connection was not entirely benign. Like the power of a magnet over metal, the personality of the mesmerist could be used to manipulate others. The notion of animal magnetism became a widely accepted explanation for how an individual with a powerful personality influenced another.

Mesmerism was perceived, in other words, as an example of the way in which unconscious, primal impulses could, when harnessed properly, help achieve the fulfillment of desires; an expression, in short, of the efficaciousness of primitive instincts. Mesmeric manuals like the one written by the Fowlers and owned by Taylor instructed readers on how to impose their will on others through the concentration of their inner power and projection of it by means of a basilisk-like stare. In his youth Taylor and his friends were preoccupied with this aspect of mesmerist art. At times his diaries from early 1840s suggest he had little interest in anything else. He described dozens of mesmeric experiments. Occasionally Taylor was himself mesmerized, but far more frequently he took the role of the mesmerist. He carefully noted the effects. He pondered the impact factors such as the weather had upon the outcome. In January of 1844 he wrote to friend describing his latest efforts.

I have found an excellent subject for Mesmeric experiments. At the first trial I paralyzed every limb—so not a finger could be moved. I tried the second time last night, put her perfectly asleep in 15 minutes. The experiment succeeded remarkably well.<sup>23</sup>

Young ladies were his chief subjects on these occasions. Indeed he found he was “more successful” with them than men. On at least one occasion his subject was Mary Agnew.<sup>24</sup>

Though not typically conceived as a power exclusive to males, the way that the instrumental value of magnetic force was commonly gendered suggested its link in the popular imagination with aggressive and sexual impulses—two drives that at the time were almost exclusively considered traits of the masculine unconscious. The sexual implications of mesmerism were not lost on Taylor’s contemporaries. Salacious gossip had followed mesmerism since its earliest expression in late-eighteenth century France where it was said that “the discovery of animal magnetism has done for love what Newton did for the theory of the cosmos.”<sup>25</sup> In America the association of trance, seduction, and surreptitious sexual possession were elaborately explored in popular fiction like Timothy Shay Arthur’s Agnes; or, the Possessed (1848). In Taylor the correlation between sexual impulses and the power to mesmerize might be suggested in his journals by the proximity between his mesmeric experiments and mention of his reading sexually explicit sensational novels. Taylor conscience was plagued by “unholy thoughts” that intriguingly occurred with some frequency after his mesmeric seduction of the young ladies in the town.<sup>26</sup>

The fear of mesmeric sexual mischief worried the guardians of womanhood. Nevertheless the bleating among moralists who feared the perils of harnessing man’s “animal magnetism” was more broadly a response to the growing primitivism within

mainstream Victorian culture. Traditional moralists recoiled from the ideas put forth by men like Higginson. They fretted over calls for young men to let loose of the savage residing deep within them. Despite their concern, sympathy grew at every level of American society for the notion that by reclaiming man's primitive nature it was possible to counter the debilitating effects of civilized society. Celebration of backwoods figures like the outlandishly semi-savage Crockett suggests the growing link between primitivism and manliness.

Taylor, whether it was in his fascination with mesmerism or attraction to the foreign lands, was both the recipient of the early romantic drift in this direction and a leading figure in the popularization of a more rough and tumble sense of primitive manliness. The way he sought-out opportunities to live a "native" way of life, with what was seen as all its physical trials, clearly went beyond the republican tradition of simple self-sufficiency into the fetishism of hardship.

### **The Equation between Desire and Success**

The persona of writers like "the Howadji" George W. Curtis (author of Nile Notes of a Howadji) and the adventurous physician John Williamson Palmer (author of Up and Down the Irrawaddi) suggests not only an emerging fascination with personality in the mid-nineteenth century the, but also the capacity of the exotic Other to ease the dilemma between restraint and gratification. There fame suggests the compellingly place which the figure of the traveler came to assume. Taylor in particular stirred the public's self-reflective capacity for exotic fantasy. By his return in 1853 his letters to the Tribune had firmly linked their author to the Orient in the minds of many Americans.

The intensity of Taylor's popular allure was immediately apparent in the fevered excitement Americans displayed when they greeted him after his return in 1852. The weeks that followed must have been some of the most exciting of his life. Although he had surmised the journey "may be the means of advancing me more than anything I have done," he was shocked by the sensation that had built-up around his name.<sup>27</sup> Informed of his imminent arrival by newspapers, citizens across the nation clamored for a public speaking tour. Just ten days after his return he wrote his friend George Boker, "I am overwhelmed with invitations to lecture, and shall have to visit every town from Maine to Wisconsin, between now and April."<sup>28</sup>

None of his previous experience in the public eye could have adequately prepared Taylor for the scale of what followed. The tour began with what seemed to him to be surprising success. "In Baltimore I had a great triumph," he wrote George Boker with astonishment and pride.

I spoke to four thousand people in a hall three hundred and fifty feet long. [...] In Albany, also, I had great success, hundreds being unable to get into the hall. I have now not a single evening vacant before the middle of April, and am refusing invitations daily.<sup>29</sup>

"Everywhere," he wrote soon after, "I have crushing houses." "This lecturing is a great business," he told to James T. Field. "This afternoon a special train comes down from Canandaigua [New York], solely on my account! Curiosity is alive to see 'The Great American Traveler.'"<sup>30</sup> "The West has taken me by surprise," a friend was informed.

I am more widely known here, than even in N.Y. and Philadelphia. Nay, it seems to me that every man, woman and child is familiar with my name, for the farmers come twenty miles over the prairies, bringing their families in wagons, to attend my lectures. I am stared out of countenance, wherever I turn, and the boys in the streets point at me. [...] hundreds are turned back, for want of room.<sup>31</sup>

“The little country towns all give me fifty dollars a lecture, and cram their halls and churches. People come ten, fifteen, and twenty miles over the prairie in their wagons to see and hear me,” he told his mother. His “astounding success all through the West” he attributed to the popularity of the Tribune.

They all take the “Tribune” and read every one of my letters conscientiously, and their great curiosity is to see what sort of an animal I am. [...] I had no idea before that I was half so well known. I am carried from place to place in triumph, have the best rooms at hotels, the most obsequious attention, and am stared at in a way that quite puts me out of countenance. At Rockford they gave me a serenade. Some of the farmers’ wives are so overcome with awe when I am introduced to them that they cannot say a word.<sup>32</sup>

A month later, exhausted by the schedule, he wrote: “I am doing my best to fulfill my engagements in the West, but the invitations increase in geometrical ratio; so that I have finally set a limit, and now sternly decline the entreaties which still pour in upon me from all sides.”<sup>33</sup>

In the following year audiences were even larger. Reports of his talks in local papers frequently described audiences so large reviewers complained of having “trouble finding a way through the crowd.”<sup>34</sup> Between the beginning of 1854 and end of the winter session in 1855 Taylor’s account books record that he gave 218 lectures.<sup>35</sup> By then Taylor was not only the most successful travel lecturer on the circuit but had become one of, if not the most, sought after public speakers in the country. To lyceum managers he was known as one of the few speakers that might in a single evening draw enough people to cover the expenses of their entire season! In 1859 the Saint Paul Daily Pioneer and Democrat, for instance, hailed Taylor’s visit as the salvation of the Minneapolis Young Man’s Christian Association. The paper reported that the throngs attending the six lectures he gave erased the organization’s “pecuniary embarrassment.”<sup>36</sup> The Ohio

State Journal put it simply, “He draws better houses than any man in America.”<sup>37</sup> In order to lure Taylor to their halls sponsors resorted to extraordinary measures. To fit their towns into his tight schedule civic leaders not only arranged express trains to take him to and from engagements, they bestowed upon him professorships at the local college, honorary memberships in associations, and the keys to their town.

Audiences greeted Taylor with the sort of enthusiasm that might have accompanied the arrival of a Sultan. Writing to his new wife in February of his 1859 lecture tour Taylor described the kind of thing he customarily experienced. After arriving at his destination he typically “was obliged to sit there the whole afternoon, and answer questions of fifty people. Some of them were even impertinent, in their prying into my private life.” On the trains “crowded with people going to the lecture” he would be pestered by people who would not leave him alone, even when he “tells them I can’t talk.” When he arrived a “crowd of people” composed of “merchants, livery-stable keepers, mechanics and day-laborers,” awaited him at the station. “Great crowds of ragged boys” might cry out as they did on one occasion: “There he is! He! that’s him! hi! hi! and [rush] after me in a body, wherever I went.” At this point although he often entreated organizers to keep the crowds away he was more often than not told simply it “won’t do—they will see you.” In the next few hours he would be introduced, as he said on one occasion, “to judges, squires, doctors, and I think about ten clergymen.” People importuned him for favors whenever they could. On one occasion the Whig candidate for Governor purred as coyly as a politician can, “The people here are so found of you, that they would be willing to carry you about on their shoulders.” As evening approached he made his way to the lecture hall. By then people had come “from far and

near,” and crowds “of boys [...] who had no money to get in,” would surround the lecture hall and yell “like tigers when we came.”<sup>38</sup>

At other times he was welcomed with public testimonials and poems. In these snippets from an anonymous piece of verse from the Minnesotian the authors reveals the way an intense preoccupation for Taylor had emerged from fireside reading of his letters—“Where BAYARD TAYLOR is a name we know and love full well”—and exploded into joy at the opportunity to actually see such an exotic figure.

A hearty welcome we would give  
Thee and they stranger bride;  
Thou art in all thy wandering  
Our country's joy and pride.

But rich in love of other lands  
It has been thine to see.  
A traveler with thy sandals on,  
'Tis thus we think of thee.

'Tis thus we wait to hear they voice,  
To look upon they face,  
To hear what thou canst tell us  
With surpassing grace.<sup>39</sup>

The mania kept up through the winter of 1860. During these years demand for his lectures led to a whole new way of life for Taylor. He gave up his regular editorial position at the Tribune. Summers he spent abroad writing letters for his old paper. In winter he returned to lecture on his recent travels. Between 1854 and the beginning of the Civil War he gave over 652 lectures and made at least \$43,500 from the engagements.<sup>40</sup>

Early on the hysteria perplexed Taylor. “It’s puzzling to me to see this,” he confessed to his mother. “Why,” he asked after one such evening, are there “men coming down from Janesville (seventy miles off) to hear me lecture to-night here, although I have

lectured in Janesville once already?" "I examine myself to see what I am, and find myself to be somebody else than I thought I was." "The people are infatuated," he continued, "and I can't understand why."<sup>41</sup> He knew, of course, that they wanted to stare "with a mixture of curiosity and awe at 'the man that went to Africa.'"<sup>42</sup> But why? What did it mean to them?

Taylor represented to his audiences a new kind of manhood indicative of this was his willingness to ignore the restraints that governed their own lives and his perverse propensity to indulge intense, illicitly charged experience and thus give play to the darker longings that lurked within him. He was the sort of man willing, that is, to buck moral convention and solid prudence. Taylor, as we have seen, projected the image of a man accustomed to danger, "My whole journey through India has been a succession of narrow escapes, but I have come off clear."<sup>43</sup> An observer in Cleveland believed that few of the 1,200 audience members who listened with him to Taylor's lecture on Japan in 1854 doubted that their speaker was a man who had experienced "toil, privation and fearless adventure."<sup>44</sup> The increasing daring of his travels hinted at a perverse addiction to risk; tendencies reflective of the irrational vigor that was coming to inform Victorian notions of male potency. A reporter for the Sandusky Daily Commercial Register observed that Taylor struck the audience as the kind of man "always up for an adventure."<sup>45</sup>

The point is that Taylor appeared to court danger well beyond the bounds acceptable to the cautious proponents of the Protestant ethic. With his choices to cross Mexico and India alone, travel up the Nile into uncharted lands, explore the war torn countryside of China, and later make his way over the frozen landscape of Northern Europe, he seemed to be possessed by an almost irrational impulsiveness. Indeed many

feared for the traveler's health and he received letters from admirers who worried that he took too many risks. Some, including members of his family, suspected Taylor's adventures were motivated by suicidal impulses growing out of the loss of his first wife. After reading reports in Philadelphia papers of his plans to travel to the source of the Nile, his mother begged her son to be careful, and beseeched him to remember that "If you have not dear Mary to live for you have many others who love you dearly."<sup>46</sup>

A corollary to the hints of irrationality he displayed were signs of an attraction to aggression. Like many of his fellow countrymen who called for territorial expansion there lurked a lust for violence and domination in Taylor that his audiences likely detected. Behind his starched rationales for conquest and lugubrious sermons on the civilizing mission, what really seemed to excite him in places like Mexico, Egypt, India, and China, was the threat from hostile peoples—dangers that he went out of his way to encounter. The poet, one was inevitably led to believe, liked a life where it was wise to have your pistols at the ready. I suspect that the sadistic thrill harbored by Taylor when he considered the possibility that he might have to kill a brigand, was enjoyed by his audience as well.

This was not the sort of behavior that was consistent with a poet, even an adventurous romantic one, and some noted the fact. Explained an observer in Oberlin, Ohio in 1860: Taylor possessed a countenance "not so much indicative of refinement as it is of strength, and his general appearance not so much that of the poet as of the traveler."<sup>47</sup> While Taylor courted danger it was equally evident he did not shy away from other forms of temptation as well. Audiences knew that he had chosen to experience the animal-like movements of the Eastern dancing girls and mingle with the bare-chested

Nubian women. The direction which the delightful physical pleasures of the Turkish bath might lead those who indulged it must have worried a good many. Taylor's description of the abandonment of self-control that accompanied the smoking of hasheesh was clearly fraught with moral peril. It was only natural to wonder, or fantasize, where that might have led him.

In the otherwise competent individual the use of drugs at mid-century, much as they do today, passed as a show of radical freedom. Nitrous oxide (better known as laughing gas) and chloroform, discovered in 1793 and 1847, were two chemicals whose effects stirred the public imagination. Ether, first used medically in 1846 in Boston, and for years abused in what were called "ether frolics," was another. Among abusers of each, as with most drugs, the excitement lay in the way they altered consciousness. All three were known to change it in both pleasurable and thrilling, perhaps even dangerous, ways. In a well publicized case in 1848, one of the first popularizers of ether, for instance, became addicted to chloroform and while under its influence threw acid on a prostitute. Two days later he committed suicide with a razor at the Tombs Prison. Ether was the first drug with which Taylor experimented.<sup>48</sup>

The account comes from an acquaintance in Phoenixville. The young editor of The Pioneer, we are told, insisted upon trying the drug and spent the evening running amuck and repeatedly trying to touch the ceilings of his host's house. Told alongside other stories, such as the young man's fascination with Edger Allen Poe and an impulsive dive into the deadly swirling waters below a dam, the narrator uses these incidents to convey Taylor's reckless manly qualities—a dimension of his personality, the author

points out, evident during his travels abroad. A few years later in New York at the salon of Anne C. Lynch, Taylor tried chloroform and was reported to have “loved it.”<sup>49</sup>

The wildness suggested by such indulgence might help explain Taylor’s popularity among women as well. It purportedly conveyed bold manly qualities that they were increasingly told were admirable. Yet the implications of physical as well as moral liberation may have enticed women, trapped within the narrow social and sexual confines of Victorian gender ideology, in other ways. Diffident Ellen Gertrude Clanton-Thomas, who eased her sense of powerlessness by reading travel narratives, was enticed by the example of De Quincy’s *Opium Eaters* and “Taylor’s description of eating Hasheesh” to experiment with chloroform herself. She did not dare, as she wrote, try the more “magical drugs” like hasheesh for fear of what it might do to her “susceptible system.”<sup>50</sup> She was excited by the idea but also feared where such drugs might take her.

She could, on the other hand, enjoy Taylor’s account of the experience. Like other readers Clanton-Thomas was at liberty to imagine how far Taylor took such freedom. They knew well the grotesque fantasies he described after eating hasheesh. But they might imagine much more. Readers no doubt remembered intriguingly his insistence that since travel was a quest for knowledge one should be willing to experience all that one could. They knew he took pride in claiming to have adopted the ways of the peoples with whom he mixed, regardless of their propriety. Many of them knew too that the idea of “adopting the customs of the local,” popularized in the Grand Tour accounts of men like James Boswell was a coded message for promiscuous behavior.<sup>51</sup> Proclamations Taylor made only confirmed their suspicions. It was easy to allow one’s fantasy free play when Taylor declared that one’s “conscience falls asleep on the Nile.”<sup>52</sup>

In other words, audiences sensed from his public comments what his private letters sometimes hinted, that at some level Taylor saw travel as the opportunity for sexual license. In one of the few instances in which his scrupulous tendency to censor his writing failed him he tried enticing a friend on a journey to Europe by promising that while their wives “support each other [...] we should be off in the mountains sketching the brigands and flirting with the dark-eyed contadine (Don’t mention this!).”<sup>53</sup> He later wrote, “My delight is in enjoyment, not renunciation [...] I know all this is gross, selfish, sensuous, mean, devilish, if you will—but how is it to be helped?”<sup>54</sup>

If to some his reputation as a sentimental poet seemed inconsistent with the hints of sensationalist violence and perversity, to those who harbored a notion of the poet as a vigorous and uninhibited man, these flashes of passion built upon his romantic image. His poetry—especially his collection Poems of the Orient published in 1854—hinted at the sensuality and debauchery that spiced Taylor’s personality. The bulk of it contained compositions concerned with his Eastern adventures. Friends and critics praised the work’s spontaneity, lyrical freedom, and zest. The poems, contemporaries thought, sparkled with exotic “Arabic” touches. The language of impulsiveness and emotional freedom characterize the comments by his contemporaries. As one reviewer wrote, they were written by a poet who had clearly fallen “under the wild and peculiar influence of the East.”<sup>55</sup> In his poem “The Temptation of Hassan Ben Kaled” a Cairo street singer falls prey to temptations. There are slaves, sumptuous descriptions of food, wine, and, of course, a maiden whose bosom is “made a snare.” Hassan’s experience brings him in touch with “evil knowledge” and exposes him to “the unhealthy lust / Of sinful pleasure.”<sup>56</sup> Other poems titillate the reader:

By Allah! Like a bath of flame  
 The seething blood tumultuous came  
 From life's hot center as I drew  
 Her mouth to mine; our spirits grew  
 Together in one long, long kiss,--  
 One swooning, speechless pulse of bliss,  
 That, throbbing from the heart's core, met  
 In the united lips.<sup>57</sup>

“The Bedouin Song” was the most popular poem of the collection.<sup>58</sup> Repeatedly set to music, and sung by glee clubs, the poem celebrates the romantic impulses of freedom, passion, and, as one contemporary explained, something a little more: the “gradual surrender to unholy desire.”<sup>59</sup>

Loved by many, the poems worried others. Lowell for one wrote Taylor in December of 1854 from Elmwood: “beware of becoming too enamored of the sensuous in poetry.” “It is natural,” Lowell continued, “that the pendulum of us Yankees should swing very far away from our Puritan and Quaker extremes—only we must remember that Bacchus was the god of severe tragedy as well.”<sup>60</sup> Others encoded their concern for the signs of Taylor’s potential sexual adventurism in warnings about his health; his constant exertions might sap his strength and destroy his virility, they warned.

Taylor’s evident disregard for what some saw as problematic, indeed his defense of his sensual adventurism, would have heightened the suspicions. Aware that some of the things he described in his letters might lead to criticism back home, Taylor offered an occasional defense. Upon first engaging a troupe of Arab dancers he wrote:

If one should engage Castle Garden, and hire a company of ballet-dancers to perform for his special amusement, the fact would shake the pillars of New-York society, and as it was, I can think of some very good friends who will condemn our proceeding as indiscreet, and unworthy of the serious aims of travel.

Interestingly here, Taylor equates his behavior with entertainments back home, suggesting again how in his mind and those of his readers one was taken as nothing more than a substitute for the other. He often simply refused to engage in a larger defense of such a problematic position. Frequently he shrugs-off decisions to indulge in questionable behavior with the most casual of defenses.

As I have no apology to make to myself, I need make none to them, except to suggest that the first end of travel is instruction, and that the traveller is fully justified in pursuing this end, so long as he neither injures himself nor others.<sup>61</sup>

Most fascinating of all, however, was his implied defense here: the fact that these transgressions occurred in the midst of foreign travel provided an exemption to accepted moral rules. In Damascus he defended his use of hasheesh with a pragmatic argument.

During my stay in Damascus, that insatiable curiosity which leads me to prefer the acquisition of all lawful knowledge through the channels of my own personal experience, rather than in less satisfactory and less laborious ways, induced me to make a trial of the celebrated Hasheesh [...]

Romance provided another defense. Immediately following the above argument he added: "Hasheesh—that remarkable drug which supplies the luxurious Syrian with dreams more alluring and more gorgeous than the Chinese extracts from his darling opium pipe."<sup>62</sup> Elsewhere Taylor more overtly used the pursuit of real, authentic feeling, to dismiss criticism of his behavior. He was giving himself over to, as he said, "the under-currents of our natures."<sup>63</sup> During his Nile trip he boldly asserted:

I do not reproach myself for this passive and sensuous existence. I give myself up to it unreservedly, and if some angular-souled utilitarian should come along and recommend me to shake off my laziness, and learn the conjugations of Coptic verbs or the hieroglyphs of Kneph and Thoth, I should not take the pipe from my mouth to answer him. My friend sometimes laughingly addresses me with two lines of Hebel's quaint Allemanic poetry: "Ei solch a Leben, junges Blut, Desh ish wohl fiir a Thierle guat." (such a life, young blood, best befits an animal), but I tell him that the wisdom of the Black Forest won't answer for the Nile.<sup>64</sup>

Audiences understood that the civilized restraint expected in the Black Forest was no different from that in the United States. In rejecting the former Taylor was indirectly proclaiming his freedom from the moral imperatives of the latter. No reader would have missed this point.

Of course, the larger argument I am making here involving a shift in bourgeois masculinity is supported by the fact that this flaunting of moral conventions did not seem to cost Taylor any popularity, just the opposite. Steeped in the emerging culture of authenticity, I contend, his fans were unwilling to condemn him for his behavior. Like him, they saw a larger aim behind his questionable actions: the rediscovery of his authentic nature. In the Egypt Taylor believed he had, as he said, found “the cipher of my nature.” He proclaimed it loudly in his verse.

The Poet came to the Land of the East,  
When spring was in the air:  
The Earth was dressed for a wedding feast,  
So young she seemed, and fair;  
And the Poet knew the Land of the East,--  
His soul was native there.<sup>65</sup>

And when friends and fans responded approvingly of his Oriental poetry, he demurred. “I feel I hardly deserve your praises,” he wrote to one, “for I cannot be otherwise than what I am.”<sup>66</sup> But in turn this ratified the acceptance of desires questioned under the older rules of self-regulation. And what better to legitimate an unvarnished pursuit of ambition in a competitive society than successes.

### **Becoming the Other**

Even more than Curtis, Taylor had self-consciously placed himself firmly in the sensual East rather than as an observer outside it. Taylor furthered the sense that he had, as the English said, “gone native” by masquerading as an Arab. Soon after arriving in

Egypt he enthusiastically exchanged his Western clothes for the local dress and shaved his head in what might be seen as a ritual rebirth.

I am going to don the red cap and sash, and sport a saber at my side. To-day I had my hair all cut within a quarter of an inch of the skin, and when I look in the glass I see a strange individual. [...] I wear no cravat, and shall get an Egyptian shirt which is open at the neck and has no collar.<sup>67</sup>

He kept to the fashion through most of his Near Eastern travels.<sup>68</sup> His stories must have observed with satisfaction by all those who dressed in exotic costumes for masked balls, tableaux vivants, and parlor plays.

In masquerading himself as a “Musselman” through Bedouin lands Taylor followed in a long thrilling tradition of Western travelers who disguised themselves to secret themselves into the world of their Moslem hosts. In 1806, for instance, traveling as an Arab the German traveler Ulrich Seetzen was killed trying to enter the ruins of Petra. The next year Catalan Domingo Badia entered the city as Ali Bey. Five years later Johaann Ludwig Burckhardt, dressed as a mendicant beggar named Ibrahim Ibn Abdallah, succeeded. The adventure did cost him two years of his life, the time he spent studying Arabic and learning the Koran by heart. He also sacrificed his foreskin, just in case someone thought to look. The French were not long outdone by German ingenuity: in 1827 Maurice-Adolphe Linant accomplished a similar feat.<sup>69</sup>

Ten years later John Lloyd Stephens became the first American to try. In “the unpretending and respectable costume of a Cairo Merchant” he too gained entrance into the ruins of Petra.<sup>70</sup> An illustration of Stephens in the colorful outfit greeted the reader as they opened the author’s book Incidents of Travel in Egypt. Thanks to Stephens the act of dressing oneself as a native become a popular romantic trope. By the late-1840s even casual tourists like the American Edward Joy Morris boasted of his deceptions dressed as

an Arab.<sup>71</sup> But it did not easily lose its caché. Later celebrities like the English traveler Richard Burton, who claimed to have entered Mecca in disguise in 1853, and the American panoramist John Banvard wore middle-eastern dress to impress audiences.

The costume conveyed the impression that the wearer possessed privileged access to the inner Orient. Taylor was perceived as having immersed himself into the life of those he visited. In his public and private letters he boasted of quickly learning Arabic and adopting the mannerisms of the average “Mahometan” until by degrees he could characterize his appearance as no disguise at all but a true expression of what he had become. From Constantinople he wrote a friend:

If you could see me now you would swear I was a disciple of the Prophet. I am become[,] “Long and lean and brown, As is the ribbed sea-sand.” [B]ut I pray you mislike me not for my complexion. I wear the tarboosh, smoke the Persian pipe, and drop cross-legged on the floor with the ease of any tailor whatever. When I went into the my bankers’ they addressed me in Turkish. The other day, at Brousa, my fellow-Mussulmen indignantly denounced me as damned, because I broke the fast of the Ramadan by taking a drink of water in the bazaar. I have gone into the holiest mosques in Asia Minor with perfect impunity. I determined to taste the Orient as it was, in reality, not as a mere outside looker-on, and so picked up the Arabic tongue, put on the wide trousers, and adopted as my Eastern costumes as was becoming to a good Christian.<sup>72</sup>

Perhaps sensing a way to tickle Taylor’s vanity, his guide Achmet took the opportunity whenever he could of presenting his master as a “white Arab” to others. He assured Taylor that the author’s Arab disguise was never detected.

Those reading his travels got to see Taylor in various forms of disguise. Near Khartoum he passed himself off as a prince sent to inspect the nearby lands. Later in the heart of India he presented himself as a Maharajah. In Turkey, like the famed travelers he had read of as a boy, he disguised himself as a religious pilgrim and stole into a mosque infidels were forbidden to enter.<sup>73</sup> His fans marveled at Taylor’s ability to blend

into the world of the Arab. Baltimore physician James Boulden, an avid reader of Taylor's letters from Egypt and perhaps inspired by them, ventured to Turkey in 1850 where he encountered the correspondent as he prepared to leave for the Far East. In awe Boulden described Taylor and a Kentucky adventurer named Harrison, both of whom "passed muster as very good Musselman," as they attempted to enter mosques in disguise.<sup>74</sup> Boulden trumpeted his own privileged view as an insider after gaining access to the recesses of, as he declared in the title of his book, "the interior of a Turkish Harem" (see Appendix A for image of John B. Ireland, author of From Wall Street to Cashmere in Bedouin dress).

If all this were not enough, back in New York in 1854 after the end of his first lecture tour and working to complete the manuscript of Journey to Central Africa, Taylor was daguerreotyped in Bedouin dress for the inside leaf of the book. Preceding the book's release an engraving of the image graced Putnam's Monthly (see appendix A). The engraving became synonymous with the public's image of Taylor. It replaced the romantic portrait by Buchanan Read that had so captivated his fans seven years before.<sup>75</sup> In the new image the clean shaven, innocent boy from the inside leaf of Views was transformed into a bearded man staring confidently at the reader. The author sits erect, with hand upon the hilt of a blade rather than a staff, indifferent to danger, ready for whatever he might encounter.

In 1855 Taylor's friend Thomas Hicks completed a painting of the author again in full "Arab" costume. Exhibited in galleries in New York and elsewhere the painting elaborated on the story suggested by the engraving (see appendix A). More detailed than the earlier portrait, the painting depicted Taylor sitting upon a rug in the middle of an

exotic Middle-Eastern scene. There was here more than just a hint of menacing violence and a sensual transgression. In the background the city of Damascus is visible; in the foreground at the feet of the reclining Taylor are two pistols and a curving scimitar, symbols again of the dangers he braved. But at the center of the painting sits a serpentine water pipe that suggestively draws the audiences' attention to the sensual decadence of Taylor's experience abroad and in particular his descriptions of taking Hasheesh. Taylor's heavy eyelids conveyed a sense of indulgence. They suggested too the subject's casual indifference to the opinion of those who might observe him. Taylor, the painting suggested, was at home in the permissive world of the Near East. His Poems of the Orient which appeared at roughly the same time amplified this message. The strong self-referential feel of the book confirmed the public's sense that, as he said in the poem "L'Envoi," he had discovered "among those children of the Sun the cipher of my nature."<sup>76</sup> The "Poet knew the Land of the East," he said in another verse from the book, "His soul was native there." It quickly became his most popular work of verse.<sup>77</sup>

In all of these ways Taylor showed a greater receptivity to the exotic Other than many of his contemporaries. Rather than simply objectifying their excesses, Taylor seemed willing to entertain his affinity with them. This contrast with writers like J. D. Palmer, who exploited the lurid dimensions of foreign peoples and scenes while maintaining distance from the Other. Compared to them the warmth of Taylor's tone towards many he visited invited readers to draw a connection between the author and the strange people he wrote about. Readers were left with the impression of a man on the edge of two worlds. As a result the public connected Taylor with the qualities of sensuality, aggression, and sexuality that surrounded the story of exotic travel.

In appearance, manners, and even spirit, audiences concluded that Taylor had become, at least in part, “Oriental” with all of the connotations and alluring exoticism the term implied. This identification influenced the physical image some had of Taylor. Reviews of Taylor’s lectures commonly referred to his “dark” complexion, long after the tawny color of his travels had faded. The exotic clothing and settings in which Taylor was frequently depicted were unnecessary according to E. C. Stedman.

[We] needed not Hick’s picture of the bronzed traveler, in his turban and Asiatic costume, smoking, cross-legged [...] to show us how much of a Syrian he was. We saw it in the down-dropping eyelids [...] in his aquiline nose, in his thinly tufted chin, his close curly hair, his love of spices, coffee, colors, and perfumes.<sup>78</sup>

In short, the exotic nature of Taylor’s passions led some to visualize him as a physical embodiment of the Arab.

By becoming a representation of the exotic Other, Taylor served as a substitute for it. If for many fans the illicitness of exotic experience were compressed into the body of Taylor, then by transferring the passion for the exotic they felt into a love of Taylor himself, some satisfied their illicit desires. One of Taylor’s correspondents, Mary Russell Mitford, described how the East was so alluring to her friends that they claim that they “cannot keep away from” it. These same people were drawn to Taylor, she said, perhaps because “You seem to me not unlike an Arab yourself.” You are, she continued, “frank, loyal, faithful, brave, generous, imaginative, and above all, nomadic. To keep you in one place would be like fixing a lark to the earth or imprisoning a swallow.”<sup>79</sup> In 1860 an Ohio native named George H. Clark gives us another example. In a poem entitled “Meditation: on a Portrait of Bayard Taylor” we can discern how at least this man had substituted his adoration of Taylor for the more distant but powerful allure of the exotic and its promise to satisfy his own latent desires.

Thou man of Fez, of Baghdad and Morocco—  
 Thou lotus-eater on the dreamy Nile:  
 Who, undismayed, has met the fierce sirocco,  
 And courted danger with a quiet smile,

This, then, is You! Begirt with scarf and turban,  
 Your head light resting on a saber's hilt,  
 An oriental nomad! ...

Who now shall follow up those unknown waters,  
 And pluck the secret from that country's heart?  
 And tell if Africa has lovely daughters,  
 Dwelling amide [sic] yon mountains apart?

They wait the advent of some gallant Bayard,  
 On whose warm lip to press the electric kiss,  
 Fraught with the influence of an orient Naiad,  
 To link fair Cleopatra's time with this.<sup>80</sup>

The intensity of these responses to Taylor suggests the extent to which Taylor himself had emerged as a source through which people vicariously indulged passions associated with exotic Other. They channeled their illicit desires into their adulation for Taylor. This, I speculate, was the root of the celebrity worship with which he was greeted. Love for Taylor among his fans amounted to the passions for sensual experience, liberation of desire, and sexual release they felt welling-up inside themselves but could not adequately express within the prevailing circumscribed ethos of self abnegation. The displacement of their feeling onto a figure like Taylor kept the dangerous recognition of the cathartic meaning at a safe distance.

The tenuousness of the veil hiding the more salacious significance of the feelings towards Taylor was evident in the erotic overtones surrounding the attitude of some of his female fans. In some women the extraordinary emotional response to Taylor's romantic image, described in chapter three, was coupled with more explicit sexual impulses. As noted earlier, women constituted a surprisingly large and active part of his fan base, and

the behavior of some of his female fans suggested they believed that if they could only get close to this man, perhaps touch “the hem of his coat,” they might satisfy their own craving for this sort of release. “I won’t stir from the spot, until I see him!” proclaimed a woman at one lecture. Urged “to make room” and allow Taylor through she exclaimed “I want to get near him, and touch him as he goes by!”<sup>81</sup> Meeting Taylor was clearly, in short, a cathartic experience for many.

The lecturer was frequently greeted on his stops by groups of enthusiastic women. At one lecture in Cincinnati the reviewer for the Enquirer was surprised by the unusually large number of curious, inordinately attentive ladies. It was “a bevy of grace and beauty,” he wrote, “not easy to surpass.”<sup>82</sup> In Saint Paul, Minnesota the sponsors during one of Taylor’s visits pleaded for the “sympathy and kind forbearance of the ladies” in a request that they behavior “be made to correspond with the pressing exigencies of the occasion!”<sup>83</sup> Inside of lecture-rooms women sometimes reacted to the author with the sort of mania that is today lavished on rock stars and actors. On his first tour in 1854 a “crammed house” of listeners in Buffalo, New York included “women carried out fainting.” Reviewers commented on “young ladies stretching their necks on all sides, and crying in breathless whispers, ‘There he is! that’s him!’ etc.”<sup>84</sup>

Taylor’s second marriage stirred a considerable amount of emotional response from female fans. In Springfield, Ohio in 1859 Marie was flattered overhearing several women exclaim: “How much handsomer he is since he got married!” Perhaps she did not guess that his attractiveness may have increased the more as he became unattainable to those who desired him. Expressions like this, however, were less common than the disappointment and anger his marriage incited. Following its announcement many of

Taylor's "adoring maidens," as one critic described them, displayed the resentment of jilted lovers. The summer of his betrothal and following a biographical article on Taylor in The Home Journal, the editors received angry missives. One disillusioned writer directed some of her spleen at Taylor's "frau." His new wife no doubt:

post herself up in all the works of her famous husband—puzzling over those sweetest poems—to which we render our tribute of tears—as an English lesson; reading them over with that spasmodic, guttural accent which not even the best education, or the poetical teachings of B. T., can extract from German lungs, or erase from German lips, rosy though they be. Ah, what a sacrilege! I can't but hope that he will keep on traveling like a Wandering Jew, and drag her all over the earth with him—till he wears her out!<sup>85</sup>

Taylor expressed his vexation to Grace Greenwood with the many women on his tour of 1858 who expressed jealous displeasure at his marriage. Under the influence of their sexual longings the sentimental/romantic infatuations with Taylor shaded into something less discreet. When Marie was not around to guard her husband some female fans displayed a more aggressive desire for physical and emotional intimacy. "As I was going out with the crowd," complained Taylor one evening after a talk in Chicago, "two or three young ladies, squeezed up toward me, stumbled so as to jog me a little, and then went off satisfied."<sup>86</sup> Taylor was frequently annoyed at being asked by women personal questions about his love life. In Cleveland, Ohio before one lecture "some of the ladies [...] asked me so many impertinent questions about my private life that I was obliged to put a stopper on them."<sup>87</sup>

Yet it got much worse than this. Sometimes the behavior of his fans shaded into the pathological. One woman claimed to have been engaged to the daring traveler; "I have threatened her," joked Taylor, "with an action for breach of promise."<sup>88</sup> Enough "ogling sentimental young ladies" haunted his trail that he felt the need to be guarded

about his future travel plans.<sup>89</sup> “Where are you going to next?” he was sometimes asked. “I reply, all politeness and suavity, with smiling face and a gracious inclination of the head: ‘If I knew—which I do not—I should certainly not mention it to anybody!’”<sup>90</sup> Still he found himself stalked by an assortment of women. In November 1854 he reported to Elizabeth Stoddard about being dogged by two women. Although he managed to lose both of them the problem continued.

Since then I have been haunted by a third female, whom by a singular fatality, I meet wherever I go. Since Monday, we have travelled together on five different lines of railway. [...] Heaven grant it is not another Coutts, to buy up the front seats of my lectures! There was a girl yesterday, who was travelling alone, and made many advances to me, in the way of smiles, speaking looks, &c. &c....<sup>91</sup>

Many of these women had come to project upon Taylor physical desires that were denied by the gender ideology of female “passionlessness.” As we have seen, Taylor’s sentimental image had led both men and women to forge what was perceived to be an intimate emotional bond with the romantic young author. The later eroticization of Taylor’s public image in the 1850s permitted the public to transfer illicit impulses to him. The traveler’s celebrity embodied his audience’s need to indulge their desires through ego-substitution. It was a more acceptable form of passionate expression. Just as the use of travel settings and travel experiences served as a vicarious means to indulge illicit passions, the public’s wild celebration of Taylor allowed his fans to avoid the troubling existence of the passions, desire, and self-interested behavior that plagued their imagination.

### **Desire as a Source of Power Rather than Sin**

Although Taylor’s fans came to view him as a man endowed with the vibrant qualities associated with exotic regions, few mistook him for having the repulsive

characteristics of a barbarian. The subversive elements in his personality had to compete with his well established reputation of cultural refinement, capacity for heightened feeling, and renown as a self-made man. Yet when the two combined they made Taylor a highly alluring figure. The combination allowed him to occupy a middle ground between the qualities of savagery and civilization—and that made him a safe figure upon which audiences could lavish the buried emotions and irrationality building within many.

Taylor was struck by what he described as “the certain similarities which my nature bears to” Rousseau’s. The author of the Confessions, Taylor’s airy observed, “was a man, evidently whose very life consisted in living; Love was the breath of his being.” I too, he confided, “have felt all the transports and the tenderness of passion which he describes.”

In truth, however, Rousseau’s honesty was too daring for Taylor as it was for the majority of his countrymen with middle-class sensibilities. The amoral freedom of the Confessions, though consistent with many of Taylor’s private feelings, seemed untenable to him. His insecurity and his drive for social approval made the opinion of his peers too important to deny. He admitted in his journal that “though [my passions] tyrannize over me completely,” they “rarely betray themselves to the observation of others.” “I sometimes wish,” he admitted, “that I was less susceptible, forgetting it is this very outflow of love ...” Taylor allowed the sentence to trail off incomplete. This passion was the source of his strength he had wanted to say, but could not bring himself to admit. Though he believed at some level in the subversive notion that the essence of man was amoral, he could not fully accept the implications of this idea, and wished that things

were not so. That hesitancy explained the qualification he attached to his aim of writing a confessional journal. While he would bare his soul, he might not be entirely honest.

To be sure there are thoughts of unmingled blackness, promptings of the Devil, which come to every man who possesses an intelligent soul, and which no man dares breathe to his friend, and cannot record, to have them staring him in the face thereafter. These must die as they were born, in darkness, strangled and concealed like the fruit of unlawful love. But all that a man may say to himself, I shall say.

The ambivalence that fed this endorsement of repression haunted Taylor his whole life and at least partly explained the lack of depth that readers today detect in his thought.

Taylor seemed to prefer to settle upon pat conclusions that cut-off the deep contemplation. Perhaps he feared that true introspection might force him to recognize his inconsistency. It is possible that for this reason, like so many of Taylor's other attempts to put down his inner thoughts, his "confessional journal" withered away after only a few entries.

After his return to the United States in the early 1850s, instead of exploring the deeper possibilities of the ambiguities he detected, Taylor publicly fashioned a simple affirmative, if contradictory, philosophy from his ambivalence. He espoused the view that man must balance the savage and civilized sides of his nature. Never articulating what that accomplishment might look like allowed him to shift at will from the celebration of the power, passion and the pursuit of gratification, to extolling the virtue of restraint and the lofty quest for transcendent ideals. I believe this ambiguity underlying his lectures and writings were a key source of his popularity.<sup>92</sup>

It permitted those intrigued by the power endowed upon the individual associated with the romance of travel to embrace Taylor without a frank confrontation with the implied sensual and aggressive imputation. The fourth son of Indianapolis businessman

Calvin Fletcher invited Taylor to speak at the Washington Hall Dutch House in Greencastle, Indiana. The elder Fletcher “was made acquainted with him & sat on the stage with him” as he talked about Arabia. “The lecture was fine,” he wrote. “In good taste. The speaker looks like a man of great labor simplicity & kindness a child of nature one of natures [sic] noblemen.”<sup>93</sup> Fans like George H. Clark, the author of the above tributary poem to Taylor, felt comfortable with the traveler because the quality of Otherness they so deeply admired remained balanced by what they saw as the moral strength of his native racial qualities—as other parts of Clark’s poem make evident.

An oriental nomad! Yet half urban,  
 Enough to show no Yankee blood is spilt,  
  
 Nor yet dried up, nor changed its natural courses:--  
 But still pulsating through your vigorous veins,  
 The native heart obeys its native forces,  
 True to its own remembered hills and plains.<sup>94</sup>

The traveler’s fans were as eager to believe in the limits of his passions as the story of his having gone native, for it eased their conscience. The man they adored for his wild primal quality remained in the end under control.

Taylor promoted this image as well. In his 1855 revision of the lecture “The Animal Man” Taylor presented an ambiguous commentary on the nature of man. Evidently apprehensive of the subversive possibilities that might be attributed to earlier views, Taylor carefully blunted the more radical conclusions that could be drawn from his comments. While retaining the general thrust of his arguments from four years before, Taylor cobbled together a more systematic but carefully hedged position on the role of the primitive in human nature.

If his experience over the previous years had led him to question norms, he had apparently also come to accept the need to replace antiquated ideals with ambiguity. He retreated into a metaphysical dualism that allowed him to cling to the security of an older notion of spiritual ideality yet celebrate the virtues of more material existence and man's primal impulses. He began the lecture with a poetic encapsulation of the position.

Our life is twofold, not only in the alterations of the world of Sleep and the clear, real daylight-world, between which we constantly vibrate, but twofold also in the character of its very being. We are spirit as well as form; essence as well as substance—like the Sphinx of Ancient Egypt, half divine and half bestial.<sup>95</sup>

This duality was evident in the world of men, he argued. The “highest types of civilized man” has hardly “body enough to keep his soul anchored to the earth.” While the “lowest types [...] retain barely enough soul to bring up their animal nature out of the sphere of the animal world.” Nonetheless they each had their virtues. While the savage retained the “coarse vigor of his animal organization,” civilized man was “touched with the grace and harmony” that bring him closer to the highest ideals. When man merged the two sides, when the “body and soul” are “adjusted in perfect counterpoise,” he attained the highest stage of progress.<sup>96</sup> Taylor saw these two sides of human nature coming together. In this convergence we again glimpse the inspiration of his meditation: the body differs so greatly from the soul that it was “only through their passions that we recognize their brotherhood.”<sup>97</sup>

Taylor's arguments represented a retreat into a neoclassical philosophy emphasizing balance. Having established a safe philosophical framework for his regard for the primal, Taylor again made his case that man's “animal nature” has today been neglected. The influence of man's civilizing instinct saps the body of its vigor. Taylor targeted familiar causes, such as the exile of man from rural life to the city. In Paris, he

observed, “the native families of that city become extinct in the third or fourth generation, unless reinvigorated by marriage with country families.” “The same results are beginning to appear in the oldest cities of this country.”<sup>98</sup> This “diminution of vital energy” had other sources as well. The incessant frenzy of modern life wastes man’s muscular strength. Constantly kept at work in tasks that tax rather than fortify the constitution, men finally collapse in nervous exhaustion.

I remember that on coming direct from Asia to New York, after nearly two years among the calm Orientals, the social atmosphere into which I was suddenly thrown stunned and bewildered me. I had been so long among our mental antipodes, that my own countrymen impressed me like a new race. I looked with surprise on the keen faces, the eager eyes, the restless motions of every man whom I saw, and tried to remind myself that I was once one of that fast crowd, and would soon become like unto them.<sup>99</sup>

Only the perspective of his life abroad, away from the “vortex of action,” gave him a chance to “recognize this fact.”<sup>100</sup>

Taylor asserted that Americans compounded their problems by excessive moral and religious zeal. Moral reformers, he warned, were trying to purify the body through unnatural measures. They hope to cure the person by cutting the intellect and soul off from the body.<sup>101</sup> The thrust of the criticism was aimed at reformers like Sylvester Graham who, in Taylor’s eyes, sought to shut-off the natural instincts of the body in order that men might conform more rigidly to moral injunctions against sexual gratification. It was for the sake of this overactive sense of propriety that one practically “ignores the existence of our bodies.” Indeed, “any allusion to [physical desire] is considered a violation of good taste.”

Indeed like the dark romantics Taylor’s response to what he saw as the moral mendacity of contemporary life was to turn the classic American contempt of the foreign

upon its head. “The morbid modesty of us Americans,” he bemoaned, “often approaches the boundaries of immodesty, and in this respect we are a byword throughout Europe.”<sup>102</sup> Yet in refusing to engage the more radical philosophical questions that others drew from this realization, Taylor used his experience abroad to confirm the belief that the majority of the middle class wanted to believe: that by recapturing his primitive physical nature modern man could restore his strength. Before leaving for the Near East in 1851 Taylor complained endlessly about ill-health to friends. The physical maladies were very likely a psychological response to the recent death of Mary Agnew. But in the African desert Taylor was rejuvenated. He felt a sense of “muscular sublime.” Under the trials of travel his health appeared to rebound almost immediately and his physical problems completely disappeared when he adopted the “semi-savage” existence of the Bedouin.

Though evidently more secure in his willingness to embrace his own primitive nature, Taylor also showed greater care in couching his arguments in a way that did not suggest the abandonment of self-control. He claimed that attention to our body’s improved rather than hurt moral health.<sup>103</sup> “When a man is allowed to advance in accordance with the laws of his nature, he rarely goes very far wrong.” Our moral health was dependent, he said, on our physical health.

It may be said, in opposition to these views, that the cultivation of Man’s animal nature will give power to his purely animal propensities. Let it be so! If his moral and intellectual nature receives equal developments, these passions, guided and restrained by his nobler part, will increase his energy and dignity.<sup>104</sup>

Finally his call for a greater sympathy with the needs of the body was safely channeled in directions that were already gaining some acceptance. He framed his proposal in terms of physical fitness. Connected to the concern with physical health, fitness reform began in the early 1850s and steadily grew in popularity through the latter

half of the nineteenth-century. In the later version of “The Animal Man” Taylor emphasizes the need to embrace the physical self by fortifying the body.

It is the misfortune of modern Civilization that all the principle achievements ... lend directly to the physical deterioration of Man. We have allowed our life to become more and more artificial, neglecting the natural life which surrounds us everywhere; offering the thousand fountain heads whence to replenish the exhausted streams of our bodily vigor.<sup>105</sup>

The rise of the physical fitness reform was another cultural development related to the newfound appreciation of primitiveness. In his celebration of the outdoor life and muscular exertion purportedly characteristic of primitive man, Taylor, like other fitness reformers, were offering yet another version of the attempt to reclaim the primitive energy thought to lie dormant within civilized men. Taylor’s rambles through California, Mexico, the Near East, Asia, and later Scandinavia had convinced him of the value of exercise, and what was then beginning to be called “Wilderness Cure.” In letters and journals written while abroad Taylor extols the virtue of physical exertion. Later, when he returned to the work-day world of his life in America or the beaten tracks of tourist travel in Europe he turned to exercise and gymnastic programs to maintain his “bodily vigor.”<sup>106</sup>

Reform of the body was, in essence, one means by which the evangelical religious rhetoric of self-control adapted to the changing cultural environment. On one hand it was an effort to translate its values into secular scientific language. On the other hand it was a way to appropriate the emerging impulse for the release of primal instincts and the indulgence of once illicit desires. Like other advocates of physical fitness, for example, Taylor believed improving the health of the body was a step towards strengthening the character. He insisted that the method of “anatomical gymnastics” he learned while in

Sweden in 1857 should be introduced “into every civilized country as an indispensable branch of the education of youth.”<sup>107</sup> Advocates of Christian civilization like Leigh Hunt set the primary theme of the movement early on when they declared “the body a temple.” They believed its beauty and health reflected personal virtue. Like the advocates of this movement Taylor made it clear that he regarded the body as an expression of character. Indeed, as Taylor noted in his lecture, the most famous expression of the physical fitness movement evolved under the term, given to it by Kingsley, of “Muscular Christianity.” Kingsley sought to channel the growing acceptance of the body into a form that was morally contained. Like Taylor, he dismissed the objections raised by some that man’s “physical life” might lead to sin. Many bodily urges, they believed, were not immoral but simply natural impulses; in fact the healthy individual, one who lived in harmony rather than in opposition to these impulses, was the man least likely to be bothered by extreme and immoral desires that precipitated debauchery.

### **Taylor as Mesmeric Hero**

The ideas evident in mesmerism, new success manuals, or the fitness movement were examples not only of the emerging recognition of primitive impulses in modern man but their potential advantages. In each of these movements desire was imagined as both natural and necessary for a successful individual. All three demonstrated the continued influence of the moral topography of civilization/savagery. They insisted upon the relative purity of modern man in contrast to his subaltern counterpart. Nonetheless they accepted that irrational and physical drives were an important source of vitality. Each wanted to assert that with the right forms of discipline these powerful primal impulses could be harnessed as a means to improve rather than weaken rational or moral

authority. The hero, all three of these movements seemed to suggest, could still be virtuous because he bent his desires to the task of personal perfection and social success. In effect, a critical element behind the mainstream versions of all three movements was an effort to contain the subversive implications inherent in the acceptance of civilized man's primitive heart. As Victorian culture as a whole had begun to do by the later half of the nineteenth century, Taylor linked the acceptance of primitive impulses with the values of market success, Christian morality, and nationalistic sentiment: ideas that had largely opposed anything associated with savagery.

These views of the body and control then were self-evidently ambiguous about the morality of precise types of behavior. Taylor, however, did attempt to articulate an argument encompassing this ambiguity: as a counterweight to the ethereal and feminizing qualities of civilization there was a need to reincorporate such passions as aggression. Taylor himself framed this point in terms of a neoclassical notion of symmetry between the inner and the outer person. In his lecture on "Animal Man" he argued that while the Anglo-Saxons were admirable specimens of masculinity they were surpassed by the classical Greek. The latter possessed a perfect balance between physical and mental strength. The Greeks were, in effect, the archetype of manly perfection. Taylor connected the realization of this manly ideal to the fulfillment of the nation's historical destiny. Taylor noted the fondness Americans had in imagining themselves the "new Rome." To become the next empire, he warned, we must build-up our bodies like the ancient Romans and Greeks, thus effectively linking the body reform movement with nationalistic sentiments. It was a theme that many others would echo during the coming half-century.<sup>108</sup>

Cloaked in the tradition of neoclassical notions of physical beauty and philosophical balance it is significant nonetheless that the celebration of the body by Taylor and others still permitted latitude for the acceptance of physical desires. The Greeks were pagans, he pointed out, thus less encumbered by the “morbid modesty” of the body that preoccupied overzealous Christians. The classical Greek was not afraid of other primal aspects of human passion. Indeed they glorified competition and violence. Also when Taylor talked of the “unnatural” fetishism of “pale” skin in females by Americans, and associated it with both moral purity of civilization and weakening fertility of the “white” race, he was making an implicit argument that the recovery of color, or primitiveness, inherent in his mind to the natural dark skinned races, would improve American vitality. For Taylor the darkening of skin did not suggest the weakening of morality, but a rejection instead of the tyranny imposed by an overactive, unnatural sense of moral refinement: a condition that had long been termed “over-civilization.” The symbolic miscegenation suggested by the physical fitness/outdoor craze, while furiously countered by attempts to link whiteness with racial health, reveals again the overall impulse to regain the primitive that pervaded the culture.

While the condition of women was often a Victorian benchmark by which the state of civilization might be measured, Taylor’s discussion focused more upon the state of manhood. His arguments supported the emerging redefinition of the masculine ideal possessed of the determination, even ruthlessness, to fulfill his ambitions. He claimed that the great heroes of world history were “men of powerful physical vigor.”<sup>109</sup> “Julius Caesar, Mahomet, Charlemagne, Tamerlane, Peter the Great, Washington, and Napoleon,” were but a few he mentioned. Each of these examples demonstrates how

Taylor conflated violence with vigor. These men knew how to tap their primal vitality, to direct their passions towards achieving practical results, and they were not squeamish about ambition or the exercise of power. Yet at the same time, these men were not savages. They had learned to exercise control over their impulses, and, most important of all, to channel their energy towards shaping the world that surrounded them.

The male characters of the novels he wrote in the 1860s and 1870s combined competing ideas of masculine behavior. John G. Cawelti argued that Taylor's John Godfrey's Fortune was one of those "curious cultural paradoxes" of the era, a text divided by the competing narratives of the traditional ideal of masculine self-control and the later subversive manhood that questioned the hypocritical piety of the Protestant Ethic and celebrated shrewd self-interest of the kind needed to succeed in the real world.<sup>110</sup> What Cawelti likely meant by his observation was that Godfrey's fall acts as a commentary on the naiveté of the traditional ethic of romantic heroism, but his eventual redemption also suggests the value of restraint. Ultimately Godfrey's virtue was rewarded, suggesting that a greater moral law does pervade the world. The key to this ending, I contend, involved what Taylor saw as Godfrey's hard earned ability to balance the reality of his passions with his "higher instincts" and thus become a truly authentic man. In his 1866 novel The Story of Kennett, Taylor's protagonist was also a mixed example of manly virtue. Through hardship he overcomes his innocence and learns that a man's greatness comes when "unwatched by an introverted eye" he "spontaneously" pursues his desires while coupling this primal power with the wisdom to know that when properly directed this indulgence is no sin but the attainment of a higher form of authenticity. Most men, Taylor said:

may be dimly conscious of certain inconsistencies, or unsolved puzzles, in themselves, but instead of sitting down to unravel them, they seek the easiest way to pass by and leave them untouched. For them the material aspects of life are of the highest importance, and a true instinct shows them that beyond the merest superficial acquaintance with their own natures lie deep and disturbing questions, with which they are not fitted to grapple. There comes a time [...] even [in] the most uncultivated, when he touches one of the primal, eternal forces of life, and is conscious of other needs and another destiny [...] [when] the strength which he had so desperately craved was suddenly his [...] he could not conceal from himself the knowledge that this very weakness was the practical fountain of his strength.<sup>111</sup>

In his fictional characters Taylor was giving form to the belief that men were divided by their thinking and feeling selves: between their objective/subjective, conscious/unconscious, and material/spiritual world that encompassed the racial and geographic realities of civilized/savage man, northern/southern natures. This argument emanated from a realization Taylor had made about himself. In a letter written just two weeks before he completed the rewrite of “The Animal Man” Taylor confessed in terms that link the psychological, physical, geographic, and behavioral components that surround this conception of a divided identity. Bored by the dour Toledo, Ohio weather Taylor knew that on the outside he was a chilled man hunched over a hotel desk, but on the inside he fancied himself standing among the ruins of Karnak “in the glow of the Egyptian sunset.” It was in moments like these, he said, that:

I feel keenly the want of vigorous bodily exercise. I am tired of pen and ink[.] [...] I want men, and horses, motion in the outer, ruder air. My soul and body were made for two different persons, and they worry me to death with their squabbles as to which shall have the upper hand. [...] I have written myself into a kind of grim content[.] [...] Ah! George! it is a great joy to tear off the masks of the world, and give my true self the rein, as I can and do, in your presence.<sup>112</sup>

In his poetry, public addresses, and books Taylor repeatedly framed his own psychic and health in these terms. It was only “natural” as Taylor suggests in the above letter that men contain two sides of themselves in equal balance. Mental and physical illness

developed when one side predominated over the other. Wisdom and good health could most easily be achieved by being authentic. That would bring the opposing qualities inside the self into balance. As he wrote to Lowell regarding his friend's fear over his becoming too sensual,

Do not be afraid that I shall give myself up to the sensuous in poetry; herein I have resisted temptation, and feel strong. I feel, however, that somewhat of the sensuous element is wanting in modern poetic literature, to counterbalance the tendency to excess in the spiritual element.<sup>113</sup>

Taylor's depiction of himself as a divided entity was a construct that his audiences would have instantly recognized. The image was one that permeated both popular and elite cultures. It was the figurative expression of the era's discovery of the distinction between the conscious and unconscious mind. But note it was a construction dependent upon a transnational imaginary: the distinction between savagery and civilization, colony and metropole. This racial and gender geography produced the terms of bourgeois identity as well as its superiority domestically and in the colonial setting. And yet the same geography of Otherness generated, through the logic of authenticity, sanction for the gradual transmutation of bourgeois values. The inferior, impulsive nature of the Other became the source of revitalizing energy, aggression, and gratification necessary in the competitive environment of liberal capitalism and empire, on one hand, and the emerging consumer culture on the other. Thus the colonial context was critical to the ongoing reshaping of bourgeois masculinity.

At heart the terms of bourgeois masculinity were shifting and sometimes contradictory. As I suggested earlier, this sort of evasive reasoning became a prominent characteristic of Victorian culture. Taylor's shallow acceptance of this ambiguity constituted a reconciliation of sorts, and was I believe his greatest asset in appealing to

audiences. It made Taylor a hero with whom audiences wanted to identify because his ambivalence fit the emerging psychological evasiveness desired by his contemporaries to sustain their psyche.

While some of Taylor's fans viewed him as an alienated romantic poet, others did not. Instead they saw the intrepid traveler, celebrity of the lecture circuit, the acclaimed author, but most importantly the self-made man who rose to public acclaim because he defied public sentiment and pursued his own passions. In all this he seemed a fair embodiment of the very reconciliation they craved. Taylor's careers as a popular journalist and public lecturer convinced many of his eminently practical nature. Despite all of this posturing, to the majority Taylor appeared as a man who had made peace, however grudgingly, with the needs of this world, and even turned his iconoclastic passions into worldly success.

The power Taylor exerted as a celebrity served as an example of this worldly heroism. He appeared to be one of those men in the new success literature who had instrumentally applied his vitality to achieve the fulfillment of his aims. At the same time his celebrity acted as proof of his superior qualities. To many his fame confirmed what they wanted to believe about the ability of people to draw upon their inner passions in order to achieve success. In the pseudo-scientific self-help language of the day Taylor's success illustrated that one's inner energy could be focused through personality into a mesmeric force capable of influencing the world around him. Taylor certainly believed his celebrity was a consequence of his inner power. The capacity to captivate people gave Taylor a sense of empowerment and "a great satisfaction."<sup>114</sup> In a letter after a successful lecture in Baltimore he wrote "It was a new and proud experience to

magnetize so many persons at once. I soon felt that I could enchain their attention, and was never more confident and collected.”<sup>115</sup>

Taylor clearly thought that his experience traveling had honed the power of his personality to influence others. If he had fled to “the Lotus-land” of Africa and the East in order, as he wrote to Greenwood, to lose everything that “reminds me of the toil and confusion of the bewildering world,” he also intended to return with a “bounty” that would secure his future: “I shall take home,” he confided, “some handfuls of poppies, and therefrom, perhaps, may make a sleeping-draught for the public.”<sup>116</sup> He dreamed of the way his travels would instill the power to subdue the world and bend it to his will. In Egypt on the shore of the Nile he described a dream he had on the last night of the year 1851 in which he tamed an immense “wild lion,” making it walk obediently beside him. It was a “propitious omen, said the Arabs.”<sup>117</sup>

Perhaps the dream signified Taylor’s wish for mastery. His letters and journals during his travels in the lonely dangerous desert repeatedly return to the theme of the necessity of control. One senses, however, that the Egyptian wastes were not the real source of Taylor’s fears. I would suggest Taylor’s overriding concern was the forbidding landscape of the marketplace. If the market was aesthetically arid, emotionally uninhabitable, and strewn with insidious dangers that like quicksand might trap the unaware, it differed little from the sandy wastes of Egypt. It was in the midst of this part of his travels that he frequently wrote friends, pleading for news about the book of poems published in his absence. He also tried to exercise his magnetic powers to divine the fate of his publication. In this light too, it is instructive that Taylor described this dream not as a fantasy but as a premonition. Perhaps the lion was for him the untamed public.

After his triumphal return he enjoyed the fact that his audiences, as he said repeatedly, “lionize me a little.”<sup>118</sup>

Taylor’s association of “social magnetism” with the experience of travel was developed in the heroic character Woodbury in Hannah Thurston. Woodbury exuded an extraordinary “conquering magnetism” honed by his experience in India. There he had learned the self-possession from whence came his magnetic powers. His acceptance of the “perverted habits” and the “wants and wrongs of the race” that most Americans believed were primitive and need reform, was nonetheless recognized as what gave him the special power he possessed.<sup>119</sup> Who could say this approach was wrong when Woodbury, like Taylor, returned to America from his sojourn having made more of himself than many of his acquaintances who had never deviated from the more common path towards success?

The friends whom [Woodbury] had left, in New York, as a young man of twenty-one, had become restless, impetuous men of business, from whose natures every element of calm had been shaken, while he had slowly and comfortably matured his manhood in the immemorial repose of Asia.<sup>120</sup>

As others around him saw, Woodbury seemed tuned to nature in ways that they could not fathom. They felt the power that flowed from him as a consequence of this harmony.

Of course, my point here is to suggest that if Taylor believed that these experiences had enhanced his power over others, then audiences might very well have believed that as well. This can not be conclusively proved. However, there is little doubt that audiences saw him as an empowered figure; and there is evidence that at least some believed that this force of personality came from Taylor’s (re)discovery of his inner self in the East. One literary correspondent after meeting Taylor wrote back to his hometown audience this impression of the traveler.

His quiet contemplative manner, seems caught from the East; or his natural characteristics make easy for him to wear the placid mental habits of the Orientals. He seems a person whom you cannot easily ruffle—serene as a summer morning, and with something of that earnest depth of silence in the look, which is entirely Egyptian. His words, besides, are not many. He does not glow and sparkle, and boil over with this restless and feverish fullness.<sup>121</sup>

This self-possession, the author implies, was the personal magnetism that allowed him to enthrall audiences. To his contemporaries Taylor exemplified qualities of what might be called the “mesmeric hero.” This was the sort of man that the popular novelist M. J. McIntosh described as possessing “a wonderful power of attraction, by which they win to themselves the sympathies of all hearts, and move the minds of men hither and thither at their will[.]”<sup>122</sup> One account of Taylor’s “magnetic” personality was recorded by a fan in the Ohio paper the Troy Morning Whig. The author expected to meet a “distant, cool, dignified, repelling, or repressing” snob from the East Coast. Instead, he said, he met a man who garnered without affectation, almost magnetically we could say, the “great respect and admiration” of his hosts. Taylor quietly exuded a sense of power, the onlooker observed. As an example of it, he described Taylor’s effect upon his host’s cat. After the lecturer began to play with it:

a sort of magnetism seemed to be imparted to the family pet, for he rolled over at the feet of his new-made friend, and seemed delighted [...] In the most natural manner possible, Mr. Taylor slid off, as it were, from the sofa on which he had been sitting, and assuming the position of a Turk on the rug before the sofa[.]<sup>123</sup>

Like Woodbury, Taylor’s powers, as the example above illustrated, were joined in the public imagination with the exotic. They were not an affectation. They flowed from Taylor in “the most natural manner possible.” At heart Taylor was a Turk.

If we unpack the incident in Ohio further we learn that the observers clearly coupled their sense of Taylor’s animal electricity with an impression that their visitor was

a rare example of a man with the tranquil self-assurance that comes from the firm hold over those trifle emotions and petty impulses that commonly afflict the disposition of most men. Taylor displayed here a quality of gentle self-assurance born of an otherworldly disinterest in mundane ambition; the kind of quiet strength that left one confident enough to slide onto the floor of a Victorian parlor and play with a stranger's cat as if nothing was less important than to assume the mask of somber dignity the onlooker expected to see and had for a long time more readily passed as a sign of a powerful character. The appearance of such mastery electrified his fans in a manner complementary to the lure of primal vitality. It was a sense of possession that clearly amplified the onlookers' sense of Taylor's power for it signified the ideal balance between passion and self-possession. Coexisting as it did with the qualities of primal vitality his easy manner suggested to fans that Taylor had gained a deep mastery over the vital but primitive self-serving impulses that he openly embraced.

One final example may help to clarify the shift in bourgeois masculinity that Taylor's celebrity encapsulated. Indianapolis businessman Calvin Fletcher eyed the fame Taylor had gathered with some skepticism. Fletcher expressed uneasiness with the idea that Taylor's celebrity was somehow itself proof of merit. Fletcher was a firm believer in character as the way to success: stern self-discipline and quiet application, qualities he had shown in his legal practice, farming, banking and railroad endeavors. He was a self-made man of the old-school. And it was on these grounds that he was, as we have seen, a strong believer in the character building qualities of travel, and on that account a long time admirer of Taylor's career.

In early 1862 he nonetheless declined a chance to become better acquainted with the celebrated traveler. Hints of Fletcher's suspicions began to surface several years earlier when he complained, not incorrectly, of the "crass" and unsubstantial nature of Taylor's letters from Greece.<sup>124</sup> Then in 1862 during one of Taylor's visits to the city, Fletcher avoided tea with him. His excuse is revealing.

I regret I do not value such associations as now offered. Bayard Taylor has published liberally his thoughts words & deeds & I have had access to them. Such men as he have been & are still well lionized [Fletcher emphasis]. I have due regard to them But cannot flatter—can't see the merit that is usually accorded to them & after all I would act the hypocrite if I placed them much higher than I would an honest mechanic or farmer, or less noted traveler.<sup>125</sup>

One senses that Fletcher's conflict is less with Taylor than himself. Fletcher, it appears, was disturbed by the prominence men like Taylor had begun to enjoy and the power endowed upon them due to fame and personality. In short, he distrusted celebrity because it vaguely struck him as unmoored from character, too libertine and insubstantial. But most of all, I suspect, he distrusted celebrity because he felt its magnetic appeal. He had already repeatedly demonstrated, and would more in the future, that he could not avoid an attraction to Taylor, to the aura of success and personal power.

### **Conclusion**

Calvin Fletcher's attitude towards Taylor in 1862 may have been influenced by the life of his eldest son, James Cooley Fletcher: the missionary who had made a name for himself as an expert on Brazil. After a flurry of prominent lectures following his return, James' speaking career fizzled. Unable or unwilling to return to pastoral duties, he eked-out a living lecturing and writing on foreign topics—a subject that seemed to have possessed him. He was perpetually in debt and eventually became estranged from

his demanding and unsympathetic father. By 1862 he had returned to Brazil as a reporter for the New York Journal of Commerce.

But this tragic situation would turn and with it reveal how the power of personality as influence became more acceptable even in the eyes of men like Fletcher. James' return to Brazil opened new opportunities for him. In the years after the Civil War he became instrumental in the opening of a steamship-line between Rio and the U. S, and soon became an agent in Brazil for the American Tract Society. He presented another lecture before the Royal Geographical Society on "Cotton Growth in Brazil" and was honored by the society.<sup>126</sup> In 1869 he would become the U. S. council in Oporto, Portugal, for a time as charge d'affaires in Lisbon. He lived most of the remainder of his life abroad. But in 1865 the signs of his coming success were already evident. He visited Indianapolis twice before his father's death in 1866, each time giving lectures on Brazil and Spain.<sup>127</sup> These events transformed Calvin Fletcher's view of his son. When James arrived in Indianapolis in 1865 his father remarked, "Looks better than ever saw him before. Has improved in Flesh cheerful & full [of] facts learning ancient & modern."<sup>128</sup> Since there is little suggesting any other change in James' life, it appears that the flush of success made his son seem rejuvenated in Calvin's eyes. It prompted his father to "regret" his previous judgments of his eldest son.

Of course, Bayard Taylor's celebrity offers us a more complete picture of the growing link between the romance of travel and encounter, the quality of personality and the shifting nature of bourgeois masculinity. It has been my argument here that if a good deal of the public's adulation for Taylor centered around the projection upon him by his fans of their own illicit passions, his status as a celebrity might then be an expression of

his audience's need to indulge their desires through ego-substitution. In that light, the public's wild celebration of Taylor functioned as a way for them to legitimate their pursuit of troubling passions and self-interested behavior.

But it was just this sort of successes that made deeper thinkers suspicious of Taylor. By the mid 1850s when Taylor emerged as a popular culture phenomenon, a telling silence emanated from the Transcendentalists. It was evident that Emerson and Thoreau dismissed Taylor's and his celebrity. Taylor's sophomoric inconsistency of thought and pedestrian ideas were not a matter worthy of serious contemplation, we can assume they believed.

Taylor returned their dismissal with criticism of what he saw as their saintly superiority. In his poem "The Mission" he makes a caricature of their ideas.

Every spirit has its mission, say the transcendental crew:  
 "This is mine," they cry; "Eureka! this purpose I pursue;  
 For, behold, a god hath called me, and his service I shall do!  
 "Brother, seek they calling likewise, though wert destined for the same;  
 Sloth is sin, and toil is worship, and the soul demands an aim;  
 Who neglects the ordination, shall not escape the blame."  
 O my ears are dinned and wearied with the clatter of the school:  
 Life to them is geometric, and they act by line and rule—  
 If there be no other wisdom, better far to be fool!

Better far the honest nature, in its narrow path content,  
 Taking, with a child's acceptance, whatsoever may be sent,  
 Than the introverted vision, seeing Self pre-eminent.  
 For the spirit's proper freedom by itself may be destroyed,  
 Wasting, like the young Narcissus, o'er its image in the void;  
 Even virtue is not virtue, when too consciously enjoyed.

I am sick of canting prophets, self-elected kings that reign  
 Over herds of silly subjects, of their new allegiance vain:  
 Preaching labor, preaching duty, preaching love with lips profane.  
 With the holiest things they tamper, and the noblest they degrade,—  
 Making Life an institution, making Destiny a trade;  
 But the honest vice is better than the saintship they parade.<sup>129</sup>

As the historian John Tomsich noted, by painting the Transcendentalists as reformers out to crush instinct, he was “able to see himself as an exponent of the truly instinctual and natural life[.]”<sup>130</sup>

Melville, a careful observer of the delusive consciousness prevalent in his day, found Taylor more interesting, or so the attention he gave him might suggest. Taylor’s generous reviews and kindness must have disposed Melville to him but the novelist interest ran much deeper. Taylor’s success as both a popular writer and lecturer earned Melville’s respect and envy. His own attempts at lecturing, after all, ended in failure. But that was in part because of his misfortune, as one reviewer put it when discussing his lectures, to follow the “matchless word-painting and the clear-ringing cadences of the handsome Bayard Taylor.”<sup>131</sup> The favor with which the gods look upon Taylor, Melville confided to the editor Evert Duyckinck in 1856, “was written upon his face.”<sup>132</sup>

Melville, we can surmise, saw that Taylor, either because of shallowness or fear, never pushed the subversive and existential possibilities of travel so far as truly to disturb his complacency. Nevertheless, Taylor successfully traded upon the persona of the traveler and the allure of exotic settings to seduce his audiences for financial gain. Melville had unsuccessfully tried to do this himself. Taylor’s ability to masquerade literally as the Arab and figuratively as what the people wanted was, Melville knew, the source of Taylor’s popularity, and the source of his power over his audience. Taylor’s careful manipulation of this celebrity must have struck Melville as a skillful play upon the weaknesses of his fellow Americans. If true, it adds weight to the suggestion of others that Taylor may have been the inspiration for the “cosmopolitan,” the last avatar of the master deceiver in The Confidence Man. This character beguiles the passengers on

the merry ship of fools by wearing a colorful, eclectic outfit, composed from garments of many nations. He was the “king of traveled good-fellows” who “ties himself to no narrow tailor or teacher, but federates, in heart as in costume, something of the various gallantries of men under various suns.”<sup>133</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bayard Taylor to Rebecca Way Taylor, no date, Marie Hansen-Taylor and Horace E. Scudder, Life and Letters of Bayard Taylor, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1884), 1:263.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Buchanan Reid to Taylor, 6 February 1852, Box 4, Bayard Taylor Papers [hereafter cited as BTP], Cornell University Special Collection [hereafter cited as CUSC], Ithaca, NY.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor to Rebecca Way Taylor, 16 March 1854, Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letter, 273.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:231.

<sup>5</sup> Taylor to George H. Boker, 30 April 1854, Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:276.

<sup>6</sup> Taylor to Rebecca Way Taylor, 25 February 1854, Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:270.

<sup>7</sup> See Carrol Smith-Rosenburg, Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America (Oxford University Press: New York, 1985), 90-108.

<sup>8</sup> See John G. Cawelti, Apostles of the Self-Made Man: Changing Concepts of Success in America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 63-65.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Our-Door Papers (Boston, 1863). On this subject see Joseph Kett, Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790-Present (New York, 1977) and E. Anthony Rotundo, American Manhood: Transformation in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> 1 February 1852, Bradford Torrey and Francis H. Allen, eds., 14 vols., The Journal of Henry D. Thoreau (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1906).

<sup>11</sup> Bayard Taylor, “Journal 1837-38,” item 29, Box 9, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>12</sup> “List of Books When Young,” item 33 #2, Box 12, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>13</sup> Taylor, “Diary 1844,” 3 January 1844, item 41, Box 9, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>14</sup> Taylor to James T. Fields, 12 April 1852, Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:229-230.

<sup>15</sup> Davis described the experience in a way that again suggests the importance of moving-panoramas as metaphors of special and temporal travel at this time. “Angels unroll before the spiritual sight of the clairvoyant,” he said, “a grand panorama of past scenes and events.” Quoted in David Reynolds, Walt Whitman’s America: A Cultural Biography (New York: Vintage, 1995), 260, 271.

<sup>16</sup> M. J. McIntosh, Charms and Countercharms (New York, 1848), 252-253. Much as the savage geographies and bodies of the primitive peoples were thought to overflow with excess heat, fecundity, and life, this interior region or savage unconscious realm could pour forth a rejuvenating energy. Thus this sort of mental travel benefited the body in a way not unlike the more mundane journey to warmer climates.

<sup>17</sup> Taylor to Mary Agnew, 22 June 1849, Box 5, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>18</sup> Taylor to James T. Field, 12 April 1852, Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:229-230.

<sup>19</sup> Mrs. E. D. Wallace, A Woman’s Experience in Europe (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1872), 13-14.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in John Aldrich Christie, Thoreau as World Traveler (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), 219.

<sup>21</sup> Bayard Taylor, A Journey to Central Africa; or, Life and Landscapes from Egypt to the Negro Kingdoms of the White Nile (New York: G. P. Putnam & Co., 1854), 95.

<sup>22</sup> From James Hall’s, The Soldier’s Bride (1833), quoted in Herbert Ross Brown, Sentimental Novel in America, 1789-1860 (New York: Octagon Books, 1975), 184.

<sup>23</sup> Taylor to George Russell, 7 January 1844, “Letters from Manuscript and Letters Files,” Bayard Taylor Collection [hereafter cited as BTC], Chester County Historical Society [hereafter cited as CCHS].

<sup>24</sup> See diaries housed as CUSC. From his “Diary 1842” see these entries. On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1842 Taylor and his friends talk about mesmerism and he describes being readily mesmerized. Later that evening he dream of being mesmerized. On 2<sup>nd</sup> January he tries to mesmerize others and succeeds with Mary Agnew; On

the 3<sup>rd</sup> he is “magnetized” at Unionville Academy. Experiments on the 4<sup>th</sup> cause his head to hurt. He unsuccessfully attempted to mesmerize a young man on the 5<sup>th</sup> and wonders, “would I have been more successful with younger lady?” For more examples see the 9<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> he “practiced Animal Magnetism” and was surprised the boy made different noises; 24<sup>th</sup> “more magnetism practice” left him wondering about affect of weather on magnetic fluids. “Diary 1842,” item 40, Box 12, BTP, CUSC. Taylor’s interest did not diminish over the next few years. For latter examples of his experiments see his 1844 diary, especially 3, 6, 10, and 13 of January. “Diary 1844,” item 41, Box 9, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Robert Darnton, Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1968), 55.

<sup>26</sup> In the middle of his numerous entries about mesmerism from his 1842 diary he also mentions reading sensational books. In his diary from 1840 mesmeric experiments on women are soon followed by the mention of having “unholy thoughts” that keep him up at night. “Diary 1840,” item 40, Box 12, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>27</sup> Taylor to Jessica Taylor, 15 July 1852, Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:234.

<sup>28</sup> Taylor to George Boker, n. d. Box 5, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>29</sup> Taylor to George Boker, 5 February 1854, Box 5, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>30</sup> Taylor to James T. Field, 17 February 1854, Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:269

<sup>31</sup> Taylor to George Boker, 16 March 1854, Box 5, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>32</sup> Taylor to Rebecca Way Taylor, 16 March 1854, Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:273

<sup>33</sup> Taylor to James T. Field, 15 April 1854, Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:274-75.

<sup>34</sup> Cleveland Plain Dealer, 26 January 1859.

<sup>35</sup> For figures on Taylor’s lectures see the “Private Account Book, from January 1<sup>st</sup> 1857,” Box 7, Bayard Taylor Papers [hereafter cited as BTP], Houghton Library, Harvard College Libraries, Cambridge, Massachusetts [hereafter cited as HL].

<sup>36</sup> (Saint Paul) Daily Pioneer and Democrat, 27 May 1859. The paper reported that Taylor received \$300 for his services, but it was well worth it to the organization.

<sup>37</sup> Columbus Ohio State Journal, 10 April, 1854.

<sup>38</sup> Taylor to Marie-Hansen Taylor, 1 February 1859, Box 7, BTP, HL.

<sup>39</sup> (St. Paul) Minnesotian, “Lines to Bayard Taylor,” 21 May 1859.

<sup>40</sup> “Private Account Book, from January 1, 1857,” Box 7, BTP, HL.

<sup>41</sup> Taylor to Mother, 16 March 1854, Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:273.

<sup>42</sup> Taylor to George Boker, 30 April 1854, Box 5, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>43</sup> Taylor to Mother, 24 February 1853, Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:246.

<sup>44</sup> Cleveland Plain Dealer, 24 March 1854.

<sup>45</sup> Sandusky (Ohio) Daily Commercial Register, 28 March 1854.

<sup>46</sup> Rebecca Way Taylor to Taylor, 30 September 1851, File 2500, BTP, HL.

<sup>47</sup> Lorain (Ohio) County News, 8 December 1860. Quoted in David Mead, Yankee Eloquence in the Middle West: The Ohio Lyceum, 1850-1870 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1951).

<sup>48</sup> see Richard J. Wolfe, Tarnished Idol: William Thomas Green Morton and the Introduction of Surgical Anesthesia: A Chronicle of the Ether Controversy (San Anselmo, California: Norman Publishing, 2001).

<sup>49</sup> Dr. Pennypacker, “Reminiscences of the Poet of Kennett Square,” Philadelphia The Press, 17 September 1879.

<sup>50</sup> Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, The Secret Eye: the journal of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, 1848-1889, ed. Virginia Ingraham Burr, introduction by Nell Irvin Painter (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 215.

<sup>51</sup> Pottle Frederick A. (ed.), Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France, 1763-1766 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955)

<sup>52</sup> Taylor, A Journey, 95

<sup>53</sup> Taylor to Jarvis McEntree, 26 September 1866, Shelley Collection, Pennsylvania State University Special Collection, College City, Pennsylvania [hereafter cited as PSSC].

<sup>54</sup> Taylor, A Journey, 132.

<sup>55</sup> “From a Literary Correspondent: Bayard Taylor and his Writing,” December 1854, Mercury, found in “Scrapbook,” item 54, Box 12, CUSC.

<sup>56</sup> “The Temptation of Hassan Ben Khaled,” op. cite., Bayard Taylor, The Poetical Works of Bayard Taylor (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924), 55.

<sup>57</sup> "Amran's Wooing," Poetical Works, 66.

<sup>58</sup> On the popularity of the song see Albert Smyth, Bayard Taylor (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1896), 177.

<sup>59</sup> "Recent American Poetry," Putnam's Monthly Magazine, 6 (July 1855): 48-59, 54.

<sup>60</sup> James R. Lowell to Taylor, 4 December 1854, Box 2, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>61</sup> Taylor, A Journey, 132

<sup>62</sup> Taylor, The Lands of the Saracen; or Pictures of Palestine, Asia Minor, Sicily and Spain (New York: G. P. Putnam & Co., 1854), 133.

<sup>63</sup> Taylor, A Journey, 96.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> "The Poet in the East," Poetical Works, 54.

<sup>66</sup> Taylor to James Russell Lowell, 13 January 1855, File 742, James Russell Lowell Papers [hereafter cited as JRLP], HL.

<sup>67</sup> Taylor to Mother, 14 Nov. 1851, Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:221

<sup>68</sup> Taylor refers to his dress many times in his personal letters. See for example his December 11, 1851 letter to his mother while in southern Egypt that can be found in Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:223; his December 17, 1852 letter written at the Straits of Babelmander to John B. Phillips as he waited at the mouth of the Red Sea for passage to India, located in Box 6, BTP, CUSP.

<sup>69</sup> John Lloyd Stephens, Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1991), xxxi.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Edward Joy Morris, Notes of Tour Through Turkey, Greece, Egypt, and Arab Patraea to the Holy Land (Aberdeen: G. Clark & Son, 1847), 251.

<sup>72</sup> Taylor to James T. Field, 14 July 1852, Box 5, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>73</sup> For these instances see A Journey, 209, 309; also see Taylor's, A Visit to India, China, and Japan in the Year 1853 (New York: G. P. Putnam & Co., 1854), 178.

<sup>74</sup> James E. P. Boulden, M.D., An American Among the Orientals. Including an Audience with the Sultan, and a visit to the interior of a Turkish Harem (Philadelphia: Lindsey & Blakiston, 1855), 129-130.

<sup>75</sup> Taylor described to his mother being daguerretyped in a letter dated 13 June 1854, Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:277.

<sup>76</sup> From his poem "L'Envoi"; quoted in Richard Croom Beatty, Bayard Taylor: Laureate of the Gilded Age (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1936), 185.

<sup>77</sup> "The Poet of the East," in Bayard Taylor, Poems of the Orient (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1854), 219.

<sup>78</sup> Quoted in Beatty, Bayard Taylor, 185.

<sup>79</sup> Mary Russell Mitford to Taylor, 18 August 1854, Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:278-279.

<sup>80</sup> George H. Clarke, Undertow of a Trade-Wind Surf (Hartford, Conn.: Charles G. Geer, 1860), 95-97.

<sup>81</sup> Taylor to Marie-Hanson Taylor, 13 February 1859, File 684, BTP, HL.

<sup>82</sup> Cincinnati Enquirer, 8 February 1859.

<sup>83</sup> Saint Paul Daily Times, 21 May 1859.

<sup>84</sup> Taylor to Richard Henry Stoddard, 5 March 1854, Bayard Taylor Collection, PSSC.

<sup>85</sup> "Correspondence," The Home Journal, 12 September 1857.

<sup>86</sup> Taylor to Marie Hansen-Taylor, 13 February 1859, File 684, BTP, HL.

<sup>87</sup> Taylor to Marie Hansen-Taylor, 5 February 1859, File 681, BTP, HL.

<sup>88</sup> Taylor to Grace Greenwood, 30 April 1858, Huntington Library Special Collections, San Marino, California.

<sup>89</sup> Taylor to Richard H. Stoddard, 6 March 1855, Paul C. Wermuth (ed.), Selected Letters of Bayard Taylor (Bucknell University Press: Lewisburg, Penn., 1997), 120-21.

<sup>90</sup> Taylor to Marie Hansen Taylor, 5 February 1859, File 681, BTP, HL.

<sup>91</sup> Taylor to Elizabeth Stoddard, 9 November 1854, Box 6, BTC, CCHS.

<sup>92</sup> Indeed, perhaps it was because they detected this ambivalence, the shallowness of some of his conviction, and the limitations of his intellectual penetration into these issues, that some of Taylor's contemporaries like Thoreau, Melville, and Emerson held a somewhat guarded opinion of the Chester County poet and traveler. Taylor's pragmatic advocacy of repression would have struck some of his contemporaries among the intellectual elite as an example of the bourgeois hypocrisies they loathed.

- <sup>93</sup> 18 April 1854, Calvin Fletcher, The Diary of Calvin Fletcher: Including Letters to and from Calved Fletcher, 9 vols., eds. Gayle Thornbrough and Paula Corpuz (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1983), 5:209.
- <sup>94</sup> Clarke, Undertow, 95.
- <sup>95</sup> Bayard Taylor, "Animal Man," Lecture Box, BTC, CCHS, 1.
- <sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.
- <sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 1; my emphasis.
- <sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.
- <sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.
- <sup>100</sup> In typical example of Taylor's tendency to confuse intellectual positions in his indictment of contemporary America, Taylor lumped carelessly the subversive attitudes of dark romantics like Poe with what he saw as the frenzied and nervous excitement of middle-class striving.
- <sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.
- <sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.
- <sup>103</sup> He excised parts that might have raised questions about where the re-incorporation of the bodily sensations might lead. In places he elided unnecessary references that described his arguments as a "~~defense of the Animal Man~~." [ibid, 4] Elsewhere, he axed his discussion of the beauty of Arab boys and the assertion that an unrestrained body and behavior of the naked savage is "~~as true an expression of his nature [as a human] as the expression of his countenance~~." [ibid, 16, 4] His caution was clearly intended to curb the more subversive possibilities of his comments. He also shielded his suggestions by clothing them in nationalistic rhetoric. American health, he quoted one English physician as saying, had declined since the Revolution. Even in California, amid what he thought of as the best climate in the world, death rates were on the rise. He contended that one only need look at the size of our hospitals, let alone the sallow faces and diminished bodies of his compatriots, to see where all of this was leading. Americans do everything fast, it he said, including die. In short, the "want of animal vigor, always precedes the degeneracy of a nation," he warned.
- <sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.
- <sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.
- <sup>106</sup> Taylor to Rebecca Way Taylor, 4 April 1857, Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:331.
- <sup>107</sup> Bayard Taylor, Northern Travels: Summer and Winter Pictures. Sweden, Denmark and Lapland (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1857), 206.
- <sup>108</sup> Taylor, "Animal Man," Lecture Box, Bayard Taylor Collection, CCHS. Taylor makes this argument in several other locations.
- <sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.
- <sup>110</sup> Cawelti, Apostles, 72.
- <sup>111</sup> Taylor, The Story of Kennett (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1866), 67-68.
- <sup>112</sup> Taylor to George Boker, 14 January 1855, Box 5, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>113</sup> Taylor to James Russell Lowell, 13 January 1855, File 742, JRLP, HL.
- <sup>114</sup> Taylor to Grace Greenwood (Sara Jane [Clarke] Lippincott), 5 February 1854. John Riche Schultz, ed., The Unpublished Letters of Bayard Taylor in the Huntington Library (Plantin Press: San Marino, CA, 1937), 33.
- <sup>115</sup> Taylor to George Boker, 5 February 1854, Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 1:268-69.
- <sup>116</sup> Taylor to Grace Greenwood (Sara Jane [Clarke] Lippincott), 17 July 1852. Schultz, Unpublished, 32.
- <sup>117</sup> Taylor, A Journey, 200.
- <sup>118</sup> Taylor to Grace Greenwood (Sara Jane [Clarke] Lippincott), 5 February 1854. Schultz, Unpublished, 33.
- <sup>119</sup> Taylor, Hannah Thurston, 354, 358.
- <sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.
- <sup>121</sup> "From a Literary Correspondent: Bayard Taylor and his Writing," Mercury, December 1854, "Scrapbook," item 54, Box 12, BTP, CUSC.
- <sup>122</sup> M. J. McIntosh, The Lofty and the Lowly, 2 vols. (New York, 1853), 1:121.
- <sup>123</sup> Troy (New York) Morning Whig, 23 December 1878.
- <sup>124</sup> 16 April 1858, Fletcher, The Diary, 6:213.
- <sup>125</sup> 12 January 1862, *ibid.*, 7:297.
- <sup>126</sup> These events were covered in the Cincinnati Gazette. See *ibid.*, 9:5-7.
- <sup>127</sup> For an account of one of these lectures see the Indianapolis Daily Journal, 9 February 1865.

---

<sup>128</sup> 7 February 1865, Fletcher, The Diary, 9:35.

<sup>129</sup> Bayard Taylor, The Poet's Journal (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1862), 164-165.

<sup>130</sup> John Tomsich, A Genteel Endeavor: American Culture and Politics in the Gilded Age (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1971), 37.

<sup>131</sup> Merton M. Sealts, Jr., Melville as Lecturer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 87.

<sup>132</sup> Quoted in Hans-Joachim Lang and Benjamin Lease, "Melville's Cosmopolitan: Bayard Taylor in The Confidence-Man," Amerikastudien/American Studies, 22:2 (1977), 286.

<sup>133</sup> Melville, The Confidence Man: His Masquerade (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1968), 114-115.

### **Conclusion: An End and a Beginning**

The final decade and a half of Taylor's life underscores the central argument made in this study. Taylor shared with others throughout the country a variety of values, beliefs and desires that defined him as bourgeois. These were produced and reproduced in reference to both a colonial but more broadly a transnational imaginary. The romance of travel and encounter were key to the production of desire, and the Other was a crucial reference point in the articulation of beliefs and values, necessary for the fashioning of bourgeois self-identification. Each facilitated the colonization of minds and bodies and the means to define and defend frontiers of class.

The Civil War and its immediate aftermath brought a temporary drop in the prevalence of the use of the metaphors of foreign travel and encounter but in ways that illuminate the underlying importance of transnational imaginary to bourgeois culture. During the conflict, interest in the rest of the world declined due to the preoccupation with the internal struggle, the disruption of trade and the reduction in travel. The American imagination also shifted. In its effort to make sense of the traumatic reality of the War, issues such as gentility temporarily receded. Belief in the importance of restraint, self-discipline, authenticity and longing for meaning through romantic quest found different expression in stories of war rather than the romance of travel. Tragically a new outlet opened for the expression of pent-up feelings of aggression. The wish to preserve liberty by conquest was reshaped into efforts to preserve the Union. Imagery surrounding the revitalization of manly vigor also changed. Between 1865 and 1875 Reconstruction and the impact of domestic economic expansion diverted material and

psychological resources away from both international trade and interest in overseas empire.

The changes wrought by the Civil War and the national shift towards insularity were reflected in the career of Taylor. For him these were troubling years. After 1861 his popularity waned. Part of the trouble he made for himself. At the height of his fame in the late 1850s Taylor grew weary of the grinding lecture schedule. His feelings of artistic compromise finally provoked him to concentrate on his less lucrative interest in poetry and the translation of Faust. During the later half of the decade he began to travel less, and indeed did not leave the country between 1863 and 1867. When he did he visited less exciting locations and produced fewer new lectures. As a result his income had begun to decline even as the expense for maintaining Cedarcroft grew. Compounding the situation, the war disrupted the lecture, publishing and entertainment industries. Taylor's lyceum engagements dramatically declined in the early 1860s. By then he was in serious financial difficulty and grew sullen in the face of his mounting troubles.

Efforts to alleviate his situation only worsened Taylor's mood. In the first months of the conflict he tried his hand as a war correspondent for Richard Henry Dana who hired him to follow the Manassas campaign. As Dana reported:

[I] sent one of the Tribune's prima donnas, Bayard Taylor, the big, genial poet and world traveler whose descriptive work in California and with Perry's expedition to Japan had provided the paper with some of its most notable reporting, to follow the campaign. Taylor piled on the satire, datelining one dispatch 'Camp Disappointment, near Centreville,' [...] War correspondence, he confessed, was 'a test of human endurance' for which he had no taste.<sup>1</sup>

Taylor was relieved when he secured a diplomatic post as the Secretary of the American legation in St. Petersburg, Russia. But Seward's promise to Taylor that he would take

charge of the U. S. legation fell victim to the needs of political patronage. Following the death of his brother at Gettysburg in 1863 he returned home embittered. Fresh lectures based on his experiences in Russia helped defray expenses but it was the fiction he had begun to write that kept him solvent. Between 1863 and 1870 Taylor completed his four novels—Hannah Thurston (1863), Godfrey's Fortune (1864), The Story of Kennett (1866), and Joseph and His Friends (1870), along with a number of short stories.

Financial considerations only got worse despite the success of his first three novels. In 1870 he wrote a friend "I get next to nothing from my books now." Part of him blamed the War. "We are just now feeling the inevitable demoralization of the war."<sup>2</sup> At other times it was all the fault of the American people. That same year following a money losing lecture trip to California he wrote, "Nobody, now, seems to read a book, or go to a lecture, except a small class in San Francisco." In 1872 his supporter Horace Greeley died. His shares in the Tribune, the bulk of his assets, never paid him another dividend. During these years he was forced to lecture as much as he could but also return to regular journalistic duties at the Tribune. He feverishly wrote freelance pieces and delved into literary adaptations for the stage. Along the way he was forced to give up living at Cedarcroft and move back to New York. "The end of Dickens haunts me like a warning," he wrote prophetically, "there were twenty years more of life in him, had not he worn out his vitality."<sup>3</sup>

Taylor felt threatened by the change in cultural climate of the nation during and after the Civil War. In his anxiety he interpreted the peculiar circumstances as a sign of a more generalized condition. Examining Taylor's critique on American society reveals how closely he tied his bourgeois beliefs to the experiences of travel and encounter. The

decline in interest in the romance of travel was interpreted by Taylor as a retreat from bourgeois values whose legitimacy was born-out through a wider experience of the world. He identified several troubling trends: the growing obsession with simple minded materialism; the insistence upon conditions of absolute social liberty and equality; the decline in cultural standards in behavior and art; and the hyper-nationalism that bred prejudice and conceit. For him each amounted to a corrosion in the importance of character and dedication to progress rather than enjoyment; the value of traditions like social deference; the higher truths behind civil, aesthetic, and emotional refinement; and the lofty values of enlightened rationality and objectivity.

Like-minded witnesses to the excesses of the Gilded Age, the rise of class tensions, and the expansion of a lowbrow popular culture believed these developments were warning signs of a society whose cultural and hence moral development were in jeopardy. He was not alone. The defeat of slavery, like the conquest of the West before it, did not alleviate the anxiety some among the northern elite and middle class felt for the health of bourgeois society. The fears spurred a renewed spirit of reformism. One dimension of post-war reformism focused upon containing the influence of foreign immigrants, whose numbers after the war once again began to grow. To counter this perceived danger, a diverse but widespread movement took shape. It emphasized the implementation of practical social and political reforms, as well as a heightened concern for the preservation bourgeois culture. This was certainly how Taylor perceived it. In 1870 he told a friend.

Don't you know that what we produce [culture and morality] is a luxury, and is always given up sooner than India shawls, jewelry, suppers, and fast horses? America is still in the prosaic vulgar stage, and we all are born fifty years too

soon for our comfort. Our wealth is generally in mean or ignorant hands, and therefore can't go where it should.<sup>4</sup>

In the later half of the 1860s Taylor presented the public with a series of lectures in which he articulated his concerns. In each the consideration of American and bourgeois culture was framed in terms of a transnational consciousness. “Life in Europe and America” was the first of these talks, and he gave it extensively in the mid-1860s. It was soon followed by “Ourselves and Our Relations.” And in 1866 Taylor completed the series with “American Life.” Records indicate he might have given these lectures over 300 times through 1867.<sup>5</sup> Whatever the actual number, he viewed them as the swan song of his career as a lyceum speaker. As parting remarks they were his opportunity to pass along the wisdom of his experiences. One listener writing for the Ohio State Journal commented, “it was evident these reflection[s] upon the experience of the lecturer in his extensive travels and observations” were governed by “a strong purpose as the moving principle.”<sup>6</sup>

Central to all of them was a warning rooted in the commonplace fears of social deterioration harbored by advocates of cultural hierarchy. In each of his lectures Taylor repeated and elaborated upon the threat to society posed by the weakened state of culture and social morality. The militant and subversive radicalism of the uneducated masses, and of the foreign immigrants who he believed largely comprised it, loomed over the future of the nation.

To at least some bourgeois Americans Taylor's concerns about status made a great deal of sense. After listening to “Life in Europe and America” in February of 1862 Calvin Fletcher scribbled in his diary, “Bayard Taylor delivered an excellent address [...] to a full house. He was profound & went into the real condition of our society ....”<sup>7</sup>

Several weeks later he returned to the topic. The occasion accompanied his report of the many complaints he had heard regarding the “trials & difficulties” the “wealthy in all of our cities” have with impertinent and immoral “German & Irish” hired girls. “Most wives of the fashionable classes are rendered incapable of doing their own work & have become dependent on their maid servants. Bayard Taylor in a late lecture here stated he knew of but one order of aristocracy in America that was foreign Servant Girls.”<sup>8</sup>

Fletcher expressed the view that bourgeois Americans had to act forcefully to correct these problems. Taylor had made that point during his lecture. Educated Americans had to institute pragmatic reforms geared to the promotion of values necessary for the future. In the years after the war while reformist efforts retained an emphasis upon the inculcation of culture and religion, they were increasingly coupled with pragmatic social and political measures. Many were at least partially inspired by European models. The careers of Charles Loring Brace and Frederick Law Olmsted offer two famous examples.<sup>9</sup> The flow of travel and flood of travel narratives encouraged emulation of reforms taking place in Europe. While not conceding Europe’s general superiority to the United States—few doubted the assumption that America was the greatest nation on earth—bourgeois Americans were inclined to recognize Europe’s cultural and in some respect social advantages. Many of them believed lessons could be learned from Europe that might speed the United States toward the solidification of its position as the greatest nation on earth. The key to that project was the victory of bourgeois values and their equation with America itself.

As shown earlier, the impulse to emulate Europe was at least in part, driven by self-serving interests. Many of the reforms that drew the attention of travelers and

educated Americans were intended to help solidify bourgeois political dominance and blunt radicalism. Common to some was the use of government and civil institutions to extend control over the larger society. Moved by the reformist spirit of the day, travelers such as Taylor used their expertise to argue for changes in the United States resembling the progressive measures that had begun to emerge in Europe during the later half of the nineteenth century. Justification for government intervention into sanitation or education, institutional regulation of saloons and other businesses, and reform of the civil service, drew strength from foreign examples. Indeed, Taylor told audiences that the cultural and intellectual virtues of European society stemmed from the “supervision of Government.” The hand of regulation might suppress individual privilege, Taylor conceded, but it also worked to foster “public security.” As Taylor explained to audiences in the late 1860s and early 1870s, the regulation of labor, banking, corporations, land use, food prices and manufacturing processes helped alleviate injustice, and promote social equanimity. In the end such regulations produce liberty from fear and anxiety.<sup>10</sup>

A man who has spent time enough abroad to become familiar with the common aspects of life there, comes home impatient of the meddlesome authority which allows him to do scarcely anything without its permission, and his lungs expand with a delightful sense of independence when he breathes our air again. [...] But, after a while, when the first sensation of liberty has worn off, he begins to feel a little regret for the admirable order and security which he has left behind him in Europe. [...] Having experienced the best features of both systems, he does not like to do without either. Our problem, in fact, is to combine them—to keep the personal liberty we now enjoy, and add to it the order and protection of older countries.<sup>11</sup>

Taylor also used the example of government efficiency abroad to argue for another reform measure: the creation of a professional civil service. The existing method of political appointment demonstrated to some just how radical democratization was threatening the future of the United States. The practical result was “demoralizing”

to government.<sup>12</sup> Important positions were being assumed by men unable to perform the tasks; that these appointments were driven by the need to satisfy the party's constituency was a problem. Even worse, perhaps, the practice was justified by a simple-minded belief in the capacity of the common man to perform any type of complex task, regardless of his actual abilities. In sum, a professional civil service, he asserted, would blunt the worst abuses produced by ignorance and materialism. The first was a problem he associated with the working class and the new middle class. The second afflicted most Americans, including the newly rich. A professional civil service would help reduce the deleterious influence of lower-class foreign immigrants and materialism of the uncultured rich both of whom exacerbated the half-civilized nature of American cultures.

The war proved a dark backdrop to these fears.<sup>13</sup> Two developments added a sense of personal urgency to this attempt to re-imagine the war and link it with post-war reformism. Out of the savagery of the conflict there crept doubt into the belief that civilization would inevitably defeat barbarism. The subsequent rise of the materialist ambitions of the Gilded Age further threatened the sense of personal virtue. Looking beyond themselves, to some the rise of materialism threatened to thwart progress by eclipsing the importance of culture and encouraging the rise of mediocrity.

While pragmatic reformism rose in popularity after the Civil War, concern for cultural uplift, out of which the former largely grew, persisted as a major theme. Taylor was but one of many former Whigs and now Republican moralists who feared for the health of American liberty due to what they saw as the decline of civility, defined standards, respect for cultivation, and appreciation of taste. His post-war lectures, as a result, continued to strongly emphasize the need for cultural development. As with his

calls for pragmatic reform, Taylor was hardly alone in his continued emphasis upon culture. Leaders of the self-culture movement such as Emerson and Channing continued to press the cause after the war. When Taylor emphasized these points in his lecture "Ourselves and Our Relations" in March of 1866 at the New York Athenaeum his comments were echoed by other speakers before the Mercantile Library Society that year such as Henry James, Thomas Carlyle, and Oliver Wendell Holmes.<sup>14</sup> And they were joined by newer voices, among them, many travelers.

A good example can be seen in the observation offered by the young Rutgers Seminary student William Elliot Griffis whose views on Japan were discussed in chapter five. Griffis' years in Japan were preceded by a journey to Europe. In 1869 at the ripe age of seventeen Griffis traveled to Europe and upon his return gave lectures. His discourses emphasized the continued need for American cultural development. His journey to the podium had begun many years before this. Born to a struggling middle-class family in Philadelphia, Griffis was exposed early to two competing models: the pious but ambitious goals of his mother, and the adventurous, increasingly dissolute, spirit of a father and older brother in the merchant marine. His entry into Rutgers with the goal of becoming a minister was a decisive victory for the former.<sup>15</sup>

At seminary Griffis was an avid reader of travel books, particularly those written by Taylor.<sup>16</sup> We can surmise that these habits were in part the sin of his father's wanderlust. But in Taylor, Griffis found a figure who had transformed a vice into moral regeneration and lucrative employment. In 1868 Griffis traveled to Europe. Like Taylor, Griffis financed his trip with newspaper letters. And the lectures that came from the trip offered a way for Griffis to meet the expenses of his education and provide money to his

family. Asked by one of his professors upon returning, “Does [traveling] pay?” he answered confidently, “So well I will go again!”<sup>17</sup>

And yet the travels were more than that. They offered moral lessons in the value of culture that pleased Griffis’ ministerial sensibility. For him culture was the solution to the desultory, corrupted life to which his father and older brothers had regressed. Combining his two passions, he wasted no time in making the podium his own pulpit. The seven-lecture series Griffis delivered before audiences in 1869 and 1870, despite the youth of their author, were unapologetically didactic. Griffis quite expectedly celebrated America by pointing out the evidence of decay he saw in the Old World. But even he was inexorably drawn across the Atlantic, like a child “visiting the ancestral homestead,” to the culture and orderly society that flowed from it.<sup>18</sup> In his culminating lecture, “The Old World and the New,” the one he appeared to have given most often, Griffis summarized the lessons he learned: “Americans are too hard on Europe.” Europe, he said, was more developed and modern than the United States, especially in terms of culture. In America, cultivation had become lost amid vulgar democratic ideas. In a passage so reminiscent of Taylor, one wonders whether Griffis had heard Taylor’s post-war lecture series, the young man argued that this “vulgar democracy” made men feel as if they could “make a speech on any subject [or] edit a newspaper, keep a hotel, be a bank-president, justice of the peace, and school director all at once.”<sup>19</sup>

Griffis did not forget to attack the “ignorant” immigrant. According to him, they arrived in the New World in search of fortune and contributed to the American propensity to pursue “gold far more than knowledge.”<sup>20</sup> Worse yet, infatuated by their chances of upward mobility they come to harbor a radical political agenda. Combined with native

suspicion of Old World society, this radical egalitarianism undermined the respect for culture and order that flows from it. Foreign immigrants to America could be blamed for social disunity and backwardness, or so Griffis, like many others, believed. Immigrants helped breed the ignorance, materialism, and rootless mobility that thwarted the evolution of culture. They also supported a radical democratic culture that undermined the healthy appreciation of moral restraint and higher standards of taste.

According to Griffis, however, immigrants were not wholly to blame. Part of the fault lay in the nation's moral decay. This classic jeremiad had by the mid-nineteenth century, as the example of Griffis and Taylor illustrate, acquired a novel twist. The moral failings of Americans increasingly lay in their shortcomings to develop a truly bourgeois, and by that they meant a universal or cosmopolitan, culture. It was a defect that threatened the embourgeoisment of American society and thus the progress of civilization. One dimension of this was the drift towards parochialism. Americans' biggest problem was a pervasive "false and arrogant" "spirit of national presumption." First, Americans needed to develop an awareness of their shortcoming. "Today we stand on the strength of our youth," but what of tomorrow? "I am no manifest destiny man who thinks God cannot do without us," Griffis explained. Fortunately, "civilization and the facilities of traveling have brought us one blessing that it has winnowed away national prejudices." In looking honestly at the Old World, for instance, Americans must "admit that we have much to learn." When he gave these lectures in the winter of 1869 his conclusion that the United States' greatest necessity was for culture had already become commonplace among educated Americans.<sup>21</sup>

True Americanism as it was understood by many among the bourgeoisie required the sustained evolution of cultural values best exemplified abroad. Only a few years before, during his lecture series, Taylor had struggled to articulate those values. Foremost among them was tolerance. For all its faults, Taylor explained, thanks to tolerant attitudes European society possessed a greater degree of social freedom than is common in America.

When we come to contrast social instead of material and political conditions, we find that the difference between the two Continents is reversed. The habit of living together in villages, the denser population, and the various convulsions which have passed over Europe, have slowly built up a degree of social independence which we have yet reached. For the most part, we still endure the tyranny of an intangible Something—sometimes call Public Opinion. [...] In other words, the social standard, which should be simply Culture—and by Culture I mean the best result of character and intelligence—is sometimes made religious, sometimes political, sometimes pecuniary, and sometimes geographical. [...] It is astonishing to what degree the most of us are governed by somebody else's idea of what is proper and respectable.<sup>22</sup>

The truth was, Taylor asserted, “the idea of individual independence, except in the lowest and coarsest forms, is hardly yet comprehended by the American people.”<sup>23</sup> This was nearly as true of the “half-educated middle class” as it was of the ignorant masses. The former can be remarkably intolerant. Among them:

A man's habits of life are subjected to a rigid censorship: even his tastes may become almost sins in the eyes of his neighbors. Does he have cast of a classic statue, not much dressed, in his parlor? Does he go to the city to see a great actor represent a character of Shakspear [sic]? Does he press his grapes, and offer their juice to his guests? Is he a Unitarian among Calvinists, or a Calvinist among Unitarians? Just and upright man as he may be, he gets a black mark.<sup>24</sup>

“Of all states of society,” Taylor explained, “the most uncomfortable” were “where the people are educated far enough to be no longer ignorant, yet have not reached the higher intelligence which takes delight in diversity of opinions, characters and habits.”<sup>25</sup>

Taylor's anger towards his West Chester neighbors for petty criticism of his cosmopolitan taste in wine and food undoubtedly encouraged these remarks. When asked by the deaf poet and journalist Laura Redden, one of the many of the cosmopolitan set who visited his home, why he had created a pond in front of the house, Taylor replied, "that it was useful as well as ornamental [...] to drown in it all [...] disagreeable neighbors."<sup>26</sup> Censored for his taste for drink and food, he exacted revenge in his poems and novels. Hannah Thurston lampoons what he saw as the often misguided and intolerant attitudes that accompanied his Quaker neighbor's reformist zeal. It was not their reformism but narrowness of mind that upset him. Petty prejudices reflected their lack of culture. "Pennsylvania is vastly behind Massachusetts, but that is partly owing to the stagnation of Quakerism." In his eyes, this explained their rejection of him, for to Taylor he was the embodiment of culture. "Pennsylvania gives me nothing but sneers and abuse, and I am a little tired of it."<sup>27</sup> By the late 1860s he had indeed had enough and moved back to New York.

According to Taylor, if the backward radical democratic attitudes of the urban rabble posed a danger to the nation, so too did the lack of refinement within the middle class. Taylor thought that many reformers demanding conformity to overly rigid standards. This way of thinking was a form of social tyranny not unlike, Taylor asserted, that which would result from a victory of popular culture. And like material ambition, public scrutiny brewed discontent. The unhappiness that resulted pushed people to migrate to the comparative freedom of metropolitan centers—much like Taylor had done to escape the overweening judgment of his neighbors. But such movement contributed, he said, to the deterioration of social order.

Unless the citizens of the nation possessed an independence of mind, a condition that Taylor and others associated with the cultivation necessary to recognize distinction in the relative merits of cultures, the society would experience a social leveling and sink into a “tyranny of mediocrity.”<sup>28</sup> Emerson had called this quality of intellectual independence “self-reliance.” It would be far too simple a conclusion—albeit one that many made—that words like these sounded strikingly like a call for an absolute independence from European cultural influence, for example. Like the sage of Concord, Taylor argued that despite its lack of development, this sort of individuality and the tolerance it bred were characteristically American because of the American people’s mixed cultural heritage. A chief quality among the “splendid generation of statesmen, soldiers, poets and artists” who created the United States” was their eccentricity. “Yet this is precisely what most of our country communities attempt to [suppress],” Taylor warned.<sup>29</sup> Nothing could be more contrary to the spirit of American individualism and personal liberty. Mental independence bred a healthy pursuit of self-improvement. When that condition predominated among the citizenry progress would occur, and, of course, progress was the quintessential American trait. He believed that culture provided people with a vision and fueled “improvement” that would lead to the nation fulfilling its destiny.<sup>30</sup> As Taylor wrote in his lecture “Life in Europe and America”

The educated American of today lives almost as much in the future as in the present. He loves his country more for what she will be, than for what she is. As one, traveling in winter through a new land, changes the snowy meadows to verdure in his fancy, covers each naked tree with its peculiar foliage, unlocks the frozen rives and spreads harvests on the hills, that he may restore the beauty on the true season, so the American overlooks the imperfect development of the present day, and covers his country with the foliage and the harvests of a great future.<sup>31</sup>

There were other benefits as well. Culture of the highest sort increases tolerance, Taylor asserted. Rather than weaken a society, it fortifies the foundation of individual liberty by encouraging social stability. Tolerance produced the quality of “harmony” celebrated by contemporary mesmerists.<sup>32</sup> And while the tendency towards tolerance was native to the American character, it was also more critical given the diversity of the population. “The balance and equanimity which other nations possess by temperament, we must acquire by culture.”<sup>33</sup> By instilling contentment, Taylor claimed, culture produced order. “I do not see why,” he asserted, “the sturdiest self-assertion may not co-exist with the acknowledgement of an equal right to it in all other men. It does, in the highest type of Civilization, and refinement of manners is its external sign.”<sup>34</sup> In a cultured nation citizens were respectful of their betters, the so-called “natural aristocracy.”

Those who fretted about the nation’s lack of cultural sophistication were almost always quick to state they were not denigrating the United States. “I do not mean to undervalue what has been done” Taylor told audiences.<sup>35</sup> He only wanted to help the nation improve. The patriotic proclamations were not simply rhetorical. Recognition of the nation’s social and cultural shortcomings was necessary, he contended, if the United States was to fulfill its glorious destiny.

It has never before been so easy for any man to reach the average level; why, then, should it be so much the more difficult to rise above it and secure the highest individual freedom of spirit and of thought! It is time that we should prepare for the last and crowning phase of Civilization.<sup>36</sup>

His aim in comparing the United States with other nations had been to highlight the nation’s greatness as well as its faults.

We must learn that mere hurry and restlessness is not energy, that skill in inventing makeshifts is not practical talent, that case-hardened consistency is not growth, and that wealth and display are not refinement. We must distrust the popular measures of success.<sup>37</sup>

“Because I love my country,” Taylor explained, “I feel bound to give what little impulse I can, in what I believe to be the true direction.”<sup>38</sup> Erasing any doubt in the matter, in the final lecture in of the series, “American Life,” Taylor steered away from the criticism that characterized the other lectures and focused instead optimistically on the advantages of the United States and the greatness he expected of her.

The shift in the tone of “American Life” reflected Taylor’s receding anxiety about the state of post-war American culture. By the time he wrote the lecture in 1870 his bleak assessments from a few years before had begun to change. He had started to believe his concerns about cultural decline were exaggerated. During his summer tour of the Colorado Territory in 1866 his letters to the Tribune reveal astonishment at the advance of “civilization” since his last trip to the West. “The degree of refinement which I have found in the remote mining districts of Colorado has been a great surprise.”

No one of us will live to see the beauty and prosperity which these States, even in their rude, embryonic condition, already suggest. He must look beyond the unsightly beginnings of civilization, and prefigure the state of things a century hence, when the Republic will count a population of two hundred millions, and there shall be leisure for Taste and Art.<sup>39</sup>

By the late 1860s it had become evident even to Taylor that the outcome of the Civil War was not only a major triumph for bourgeois society but its internationalist impulses as well. At the most obvious level the defeat of the South equaled a victory for many of the values central to bourgeois ideology: the principle of free labor, the liberal economic and political theory, and the values of the Protestant work ethic. It also insured the continued rise of an economy focused upon industrialized mass production. The

power of the federal government was immeasurably enhanced as were the state and civic institutional instruments of social coercion that were to be used by the bourgeois reformers to reshape society in their own image.

Bourgeois culture, it appeared, had emerged from the Civil War triumphant rather than endangered. The new waves of immigrants, urban slums, radical democratic impulses and danger of cultural leveling were issues that required attention but did not threaten bourgeois social hegemony. Finally, that transnational values and outlook that were an historical feature of bourgeois identity were alive and well.

As it turned out the decline in interest in the world was nothing more than a temporary effect of the War. The romance of travel had never entirely disappeared. And it returned slowly once the War ended. Talk of travel to Europe and elsewhere resumed its earlier prominence in the press. Indeed during the next few decades the growth of transportation technologies, prosperity, and the tourist industry produced an acceleration of overseas travel and rekindled public imagination in things foreign.

Predictably the return of interest in the rest of the world coincided with a resurgence in Taylor's career. In 1873 and 1874 he recaptured fame as a travel writer while covering the Vienna World's Fair and then quick return visits to Egypt and stopover in Iceland. His letters in the Tribune once again garnered attention, and upon his return came the familiar calls from lyceum boards throughout the nation.

In 1876 he was asked to write the Tribune guide to the Centennial Celebration and World's Fair in Philadelphia. Taylor poured his knowledge of foreign lands into his review. The event marked yet another evolution in the nation's growing internationalism. It also embodied the victory of bourgeois culture. A visit to the Fair was frequently

described as a tour around the world. The grounds were dotted with scores of exhibits dedicated to educating the public about foreign nations. Some were intended to be exotic entertainments. Many others were established by foreign legations to expand sales of their imports within the United States. Visitors could return home with their souvenirs from “abroad.” Japanese vases and fans, French dresses, English manufactured goods, and Egyptian exotica were some of the many foreign goods for sale. The Fair, in short, was part of the growing transnationalist nature of bourgeois consumer culture. To extend the excitement it produced one had only to make one’s way across the grounds to the pavilion erected by the Thomas Cook, the English travel agent, and book a trip anywhere one might wish to visit.

Other displays at the Fair were intended to elevate civilization and culture at home, and thus the rule of bourgeois Americans. These too, however, revealed the cosmopolitan nature of bourgeois values. The building of art—one of the most heavily visited exhibits—contained painting and sculptures from Europe and the United States. Like the message that permeated the commercial exhibits, the contents of the arts building revealed the shared vision of bourgeois taste and asserted without question the superiority of those values to others. The tens of thousands of working-class Americans who toured this building were educated about the superiority of bourgeois artistic forms and the underlying values like the reverence for aesthetic and emotional refinement that produced them. Thus while such exhibits reflected the transnational nature of the bourgeoisie, they seamlessly functioned as a means of reinforcing cultural hierarchy and thus solidifying domestic hegemony of Americans who composed this social group.

The lowbrow culture Taylor fretted about in his lectures lurked nearby on the Midway. The erotic and threatening possibilities of the foreign were much in display. A quick walk out of the grounds took one within reach of the sensual pleasures of the Turkish tea house and to a stage with scantily clad belly-dancers. Taylor marked the former as a must see sight in his review of the Fair for the Tribune. Nonetheless the Midway exuded a domesticated feel. The carnivalesque possibilities were tightly restrained. It offered no more than a safety valve for the pressures of bourgeois existence: enough of the aura of the exotic to satisfy the romantic and subversive longing of the customers.

Parochial nationalism, the flip side of bourgeois cosmopolitanism, was abundantly evident at the Fair as well. The festivities were, after all, intended in part as a celebration of the nation's centennial. In the shadow of the coming end to Reconstruction, the Fair also symbolized the reunification of the nation. Predicable proclamations regarding the superiority of the United States surrounded the event. Galleries roared with pleasure each time American products won grand prizes.

At the same time, however, these nationalist sentiments were mixed with vigorous messages declaring the country's future was inextricably linked with the rest of the world. The world, it was repeatedly proclaimed, could not get along without the United States. Ethnological displays taught the relative backwardness and dependence of many foreign peoples. The rest of the world needed the example of the nation's progressive spirit if not direct aid to move forward. That included the sale of American trade goods. Predictions of an explosion in foreign trade saturated newspapers. And indeed 1876 was the year that United State's exports began to consistently exceed imports.<sup>40</sup>

Interconnected with material progress, of course, was the sense of moral mission. Missionary and charitable organizations proudly advertised their efforts to bring civilization to the world. In effect, the Fair proclaimed that the nation would be strongly connected with the wider world during its next hundred years.

The nation was tentatively returning to the policies of overseas imperial expansion cut short by the Civil War. In the years after 1865 William Henry Seward fashioned a vision of America's future empire that shaped the nation's policy for decades. A believer in the providential mission of the United States, Seward reawakened the drive towards overseas empire. He purchased Alaska, took possession of the Midway Islands, and began to prepare the way towards the annexation of Hawaii. Not surprisingly one of his first acts after leaving office was to embark on a tour around the world. He wanted to see the future of America for himself.<sup>41</sup>

Immediately following the War, the United States expanded its presence in the Caribbean, Pacific and in Asia. In 1882 the American minister to China, John Russell Young, solidified the more independent policy begun under Seward. In 1876 Young, once a Tribune coworker of Taylor's, had developed a strong sense of the coming importance of internationalism to the United States when he followed Ulysses S. Grant on his two year journey around the world. Leaders were preparing the nation for a great leap towards empire that would come in the final decades of the century.

A sign perhaps of his return to popularity, Taylor was asked to deliver the Centennial Ode at the Exhibition. It celebrated the coming century of American national expansion. Typical of fatuous civic verse of the day, Taylor's poem compared the nation and its influence upon the future of the world to the coming dawn. After years of neglect

the cheers from the tens of thousands who stood in sweltering heat made him giddy. The honor further restored Taylor's sense of pride. As one friend described it, "Taylor's delight in the triumphant success of his ode was almost pathetic in its childlike ecstasy of happiness."<sup>42</sup> Fame had always come at a cost, but Taylor had learned to take it in better spirits. To an enquiry in 1877 asking if he sold "Orations" he ruefully responded.

Sir,--I have received your letter asking me the price of an oration [...] I regret to say that I am quite out of orations ready-made. The recent political excitement obliged me to prepare a large number for the politicians on both sides; and I have taken a contract to write seventy-five sermons for a new sect which will soon come into existence. As it is generally known that I furnish speeches, orations, scientific lectures, sermons, and humorous entertainments, I have more applications than I can fill[.] [...] Mr. R. H. Stoddard, however, has quite a number of scientific and exoteric orations, some of which have been once used in Texas and Oregon, but are still new in the Atlantic States. [...] I may remark, however, that the price of ready-made orations has increased within a year or two, owing to the great number of new reputations which we have been called upon to construct. Yours truly, Bayard Taylor<sup>43</sup>

Taylor however never fully recaptured the celebrity status he once enjoyed. He increasingly shared the stage with other apostles of the romance of travel. His role as the public's preeminent guide in its imaginative engagement with the foreign was supplanted by a host of Gilded Age figures. In the early 1870s John Lawson Stoddard replaced Taylor as the leading travel lecturer. The young George Kennan, no stranger to the lyceum stage, fashioned a compelling persona as explorer and political observer. William Eliot Griffis, after three years teaching in Japan, returned and began a new career as cultural interpreter. In the field of literary travel there emerged many rivals, led perhaps by Henry James and William Dean Howells. To the extent Taylor served as a commentator on foibles of bourgeois pretensions, Mark Twain easily usurped that crown. In terms of the sheer scale of travel Frank Vincent bettered Taylor many times over. Increasingly ambassadors, scientists, military personnel, merchants, and missionaries

sought to edify and occasionally amuse the public. And then there was the deluge of books by tourists, some of whom turned pleasure into a profession. All too often they wrote with nauseating prolixity. In all, travel writing became increasingly specialized and voluminous.

Taylor's status was also affected by his increasing devotion to writing poetry during the 1860s and 1870s to change his image. He also carved-out a position for himself as expert in German studies. The publication of his translation of Faust was followed by a German history and a series of lectures on its literature. The History of Germany may have been written "for the sake of bread and butter," but his efforts bore greater fruit in 1870 when he was offered the position of non-resident professor of German literature at Cornell.<sup>44</sup>

In many ways this shift in Taylor's career reflected the growth of bourgeois professionalization. Information on foreign lands and peoples was increasingly seen as a critical body of knowledge. Taylor, the traveler, did not really fit into this emerging new category of bourgeois identity. His effort to become an expert in Germany was his way of adapting to professionalization.

Fortunately Taylor could still count on being seen as an elder statesman of American travelers—a position that still conveyed an aura of arcane knowledge. His days as the "Great American Traveler" had certainly left a lasting impression, particularly on the generation that came after him. Stoddard, Kennan, Griffis, Howells, and Vincent all drew inspiration from Taylor. Because of this status Taylor was continually asked to act as editor for collections of travel literature such as Picturesque Europe and Scribner's five volume Illustrated Library of Travel.<sup>45</sup>

The honorary status he had assumed was best reflected in President Hayes' decision in 1878 to ask Taylor to become the nation's first Ambassador to Germany. The President, an admirer of Taylor's work, made clear that it was an appointment that depended upon a promise by Taylor that he would spend the bulk of his time working on his proposed biography of Goethe and Schiller. "There's a rewarding as well as an avenging fate! What a payment for all my years of patient and unrecognized labor!" Taylor wrote to Sidney Lanier.<sup>46</sup> The festivities before his departure included several tributes, farewell addresses, and a breakfast banquet sponsored by the Century Club (see appendix A for invitation card). Later a dinner at the same location included a serenade by New York German Liederkrantz. He became an honorary membership in a variety of organizations. He was invited to dinner at the White House. Before leaving he graced the cover of Puck magazine (see appendix A for photo of the cover).

Onboard the steamer to Europe he whiled away time with Mark Twain. Their departure on April 11, 1878 was the subject of a jovial account in the New York Times.<sup>47</sup> Following their arrival Twain wrote to Howells, "We had 2 almost devilish weeks at sea (and I tell you Bayard Taylor is a really lovable man—which you already knew)."<sup>48</sup> Twain flattered Taylor a few months later when in a letter he explained that "I have been provoked into expressing the opinion that you are the only foreigner except God who can [read German newspapers]. I would not rob you of your food or your clothes or your umbrella, but if I caught your German out I would take it."<sup>49</sup>

The years of hard work, however, had taken their toll on Taylor. Before leaving he showed signs of illness. After visiting friends in England and Paris he settled in to life in Berlin, and a rapid decline. Taylor's lingering significance in the imagination of

Americans can perhaps be measured in the response to his death. The nation bore the news of Taylor's death in Germany on December 19, 1878 as one does the loss of an exotic relative counted upon to enliven dull family gatherings. His life had made those of his many readers appear incrementally more tolerable and the world substantially more meaningful. Congress passed a bill honoring Taylor's life and made a financial gift to his widow. Across the country there were countless gatherings of fans and friends. Clubs dedicated to his poetry held tearful meetings. Scholars declared the nation had lost one of its brightest lights. In Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, his birthplace, the townspeople remained in stunned silence for several days contemplating the unexpected disaster. For most of their lives he had survived in distant, alien, and dangerous worlds. Now he was dead at fifty-three.<sup>50</sup>

In the great cultural centers of the nation matters were equally disturbed. New York had lost one of its own. The New York Tribune devoted a somber edition to his remembrance.<sup>51</sup> The aging ranks of Gotham's first bohemian movement held quiet vigil. Puck, that cavorting Rabelaisian journal of metropolitan cheer had, only eight months before, celebrated Taylor's appointment as minister by placing a portrait of him on its cover and proclaiming "Farewell to Bayard Taylor." Now in the midst of mourning, the newest edition could not muster the mordant cynicism proclaimed by its masthead's imprimatur, "what fools these mortals be," and instead spoke plainly of the sorrow accompanying untimely, inexplicable loss (see appendix A for illustration of the return and display of Taylor's coffin).<sup>52</sup>

In stately Boston the Young Men's Congress planned a discreet tribute. They invited the city's dignitaries from across the country to a solemn gathering. News spread,

however, and thousands turned out. The crowd choked the streets outside Tremont Temple; police were forced to barricade the building. Inside, amid the uproar, participants tried to stay calm. Letters were read from cultural and civic leaders around the country, including President Rutherford B. Hayes, publisher James T. Fields, and author/editor William Dean Howells. The proceedings culminated in an address by Oliver W. Holmes and a reading of Longfellow's freshly written memorial poem "Bayard Taylor."<sup>53</sup>

We can guess that this myriad audience shared the feelings expressed in this poem, appearing in the Tribune Christmas Day 1878.

In other years—lost youth's enchanted years  
 Seen now and evermore, through blinding tears  
 And empty longing for what may not be—  
 The Desert gave him back to us; the Sea  
 Yielded him up; the icy Northland strand  
 Lured him not long, nor that soft German air  
 He loved could keep him. Ever his own land  
 Fettered his heart and brought him back again,  
 What sounds are those of farewell and despair  
 What unknown way is this that he has gone,  
 Our Bayard, in such silence, and alone?  
 What new, strange guest has tempted him once more  
 To leave us? Vainly standing by the shore  
 We strain our eyes. But patience [...] when the soft  
 Spring gales are blowing over Cedarcroft,  
 Whitening the hawthorn; when violets bloom  
 Among the Brandywine, and overhead  
 The sky is blue as Italy's—he will come;  
 Ay, he will come. I cannot make him dead.<sup>54</sup>

It is evident from the outpouring of letters and memorials honoring Taylor in newspapers throughout the country, that to many Americans, Taylor was more a myth than a man. Among them may have been the rural Iowa and Minnesota farmers who had at one time traveled great distances in the dead of winter to trade newspapers with his letters in them.

Others were the promising young men who had pestered him for advice. There were the ministers, politicians, and business leaders who enjoyed the fireside travels his book allowed. Then there were the numerous shopkeepers, clerks, and industrious mechanics who had crowded his lectures. Women who read his books to escape the confines of their domestic sphere missed him as well. And, then, too there were the bolder young ladies who had tried to steal moments of intimacy on trains and in the dim gaslight of lyceum halls. Still others saddened by his passing included the aspiring artists, poets, novelists, and journalists who had looked to Taylor for inspiration. More common were the sentimental men and women who sang his songs at glee club gatherings. In his many fans Taylor had elicited powerful emotions. He, or at least the romance of travel that surrounded him, meant something very important to them.

---

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Louis Morris Starr, Bohemian Brigade; Civil War Newsmen in Action (New York: Knopf, 1954), 93-94.

<sup>2</sup> Taylor to Jervis McEntree, 12 April 1870, Marie Hansen-Taylor and Horace E. Scudder, Life and Letters of Bayard Taylor, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1884), 2:527.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor to James T. Field, 6 May 1870, Box 5, Bayard Taylor Papers [hereafter cited as BTP], Cornell University Special Collections [hereafter cited as CUSC], Ithaca, NY.

<sup>4</sup> Taylor to Jervis McEntree, 12 April 1870.

<sup>5</sup> The actual number was lower because during many of these years he also spoke about his experiences in Russia.

<sup>6</sup> Ohio State Journal, 16 December 1869.

<sup>7</sup> 3 February 1862, Calvin Fletcher, The Diary of Calvin Fletcher: Including Letters to and from Calved Fletcher, 9 vols., eds. Gayle Thornbrough and Paula Corpuz (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1983), 7:325.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 7:363.

<sup>9</sup> They were guided by elite and middle-class leaders many of whom had cultivated international ties. Charles Loring Brace, one such leader, the author of two travel books to Europe, including Hungry in 1851, a tale of captivity in Transylvania under reactionary Austrian authorities. Brace had returned to America, where his fears of the revolutionary potential of the nation's growing population of poor urban children, often called "street Arabs," inspired his creation of the Children's Aid Society. For example of the use of the term "street Arab" see Jacob Riis, How the Other Half Lives (New York, 1890), 148; and George C. Needham, Street Arabs and Gutter Snipes (New York, 1884). Brace's reformist vision was inspired not only by his European travel, but also by English reformism and social thought like that of Herbert Spencer. See Boyer, Urban Masses, 106. In a different fashion Brace's close friend, Frederick Law Olmsted, drew from his European travels too. Inspired by examples from abroad, Olmsted attacked the problem of civil strife in cities after the war by promoting the building of parks. For both men knowledge of Europe provided a comparative context for concern about the future of bourgeois culture in the United States.

<sup>10</sup> Taylor, "Life in Europe and America," Lecture Box, Bayard Taylor Collection [hereafter cited as BTC], Chester County Historical Society [hereafter cited as CCHS], 9-13.

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>12</sup> Taylor, "The American People," BTC, CCHS, 57.

<sup>13</sup> The trauma of personal loss left a lingering impact on the consciousness of many. The death of Taylor's brother at Gettysburg, for instance, appears to have quickened his need to find a lasting, higher, and therefore compensatory, purpose in his life. Perhaps it was the guilt of survival, or of not having served. Perhaps it was the awareness of his mortality. Post-war cultural developments point to efforts to assuage loss, guilt, and angst retroactively through efforts to invest the conflict with the laurels of a noble cause. See Anne Rose, Victorianism and the Civil War (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> George C.D Odell, Annals of the New York Stage, vol. VIII (1865-1870) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), 114.

<sup>15</sup> There have been several biographical studies of Griffis life. All have been valuable sources of information and insight. See Frances Yeomans Helbig, "William Elliot Griffis: Entrepreneur of Ideas," Ph.D. dissertation University of Rochester, NY, 1966; Edward R. Beauchamp, An American Teacher in Early Meiji Japan (New York: University of Hawaii Press, 1976); Robert A. Rosenstone, Mirror in the Shrine: American Encounter with Meiji Japan (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988). Like Taylor he wanted to study in Germany. Unsuccessful, upon returning he launched himself into lecturing.

<sup>16</sup> Griffis kept notebooks with the lists of his readings during the school years and his summers off. See his "School Notebooks," Griffis Collection [hereafter cited as GC], Rutgers University Special Collections (hereafter cited as RUSC), Group I B 10.1

<sup>17</sup> William Elliot Griffis, Sunny Memories of Three Pastorates (Ithaca, NY: Andrus and Church, 1903), 78.

<sup>18</sup> Even in mighty England, having "reached the acme of her glory" but trapped in the "dead shell of tradition," appears "doomed to be ruined along with Greece, Assyria, Carthage, Venice and Holland" culture thrives to a degree that American can only envy. For this quote see "Lectures on Europe" 1869.

<sup>19</sup> William Elliot Griffis, "England's Metropolis," GC, RUSC.

<sup>20</sup> William Elliot Griffis, "The Old World and the New," GC, RUSC.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>22</sup> Taylor, "Life in Europe and America," 15-16.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Smyth, Bayard Taylor, 123.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 18, 32-33.

<sup>29</sup> Taylor, "Life in Europe and America," 31, 32.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 39-40.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>39</sup> Bayard Taylor, Colorado: A Summer Trip (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1867), 131, 184.

<sup>40</sup> Edward C. Kirkland, Industry Comes of Age: Business, Labor, and Public Policy, 1860-1897 (New York, 1961), 278-279.

<sup>41</sup> William Henry Seward, William H. Seward's Travels Around the World, ed. by Olive Risley Seward (New York: Appleton, 1873).

<sup>42</sup> William Winter, Old Friends; Being Literary Recollections of Other Days (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1909), 170.

<sup>43</sup> Hansen-Taylor, Life and Letters, 2:700.

<sup>44</sup> Taylor described it as such in a letter to William Winter 2 October 1872 from Gotha, Germany. Quoted in Winter, Old Friends, 173.

---

<sup>45</sup> Bayard Taylor, Picturesque Europe: Delineations by Pen and Pencil of the Natural Feature and the Picturesque and historical Places of Great Britain and the Continent (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1877). The Scribner series included: Travels in Arabia (1871), Japan in Our Day (1872), Travels in South Africa (1872), The Lake Regions of Central Africa (1873), and Central Asia (1874).

<sup>46</sup> Bayard Taylor to Sidney Lanier, 19 February 1878, Box 6, BTC, CUSC.

<sup>47</sup> The New York Times, 12 April 1878, "The Start for Germany, Bayard Taylor off to Berlin, The Holsatia Carries Away the New Minister, Accompanied by Mark Twain and his Family."

<sup>48</sup> Samuel Clemens to W. D. Howells, 4 May 1878, Albert Bigelow Paine, (ed.), Mark Twain's Letters, 1876-1885, vol. 3 (New York: Harper & Brothers; 1st edition, 1917), 28.

<sup>49</sup> Samuel Clemens to BT, 14 December 1878, Box 1, Bayard Taylor Papers [hereafter cited as BTP], Cornell University Special Collections, Ithaca, New York [hereafter cited as CUSC].

<sup>50</sup> For the various accounts of the reaction to Taylor's death see his scrapbooks from 1878, items 57, 58, and 60, Box 10, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>51</sup> New York Tribune, Friday 20 December 1878.

<sup>52</sup> Puck, no. 57, 3 (April 10, 1878).

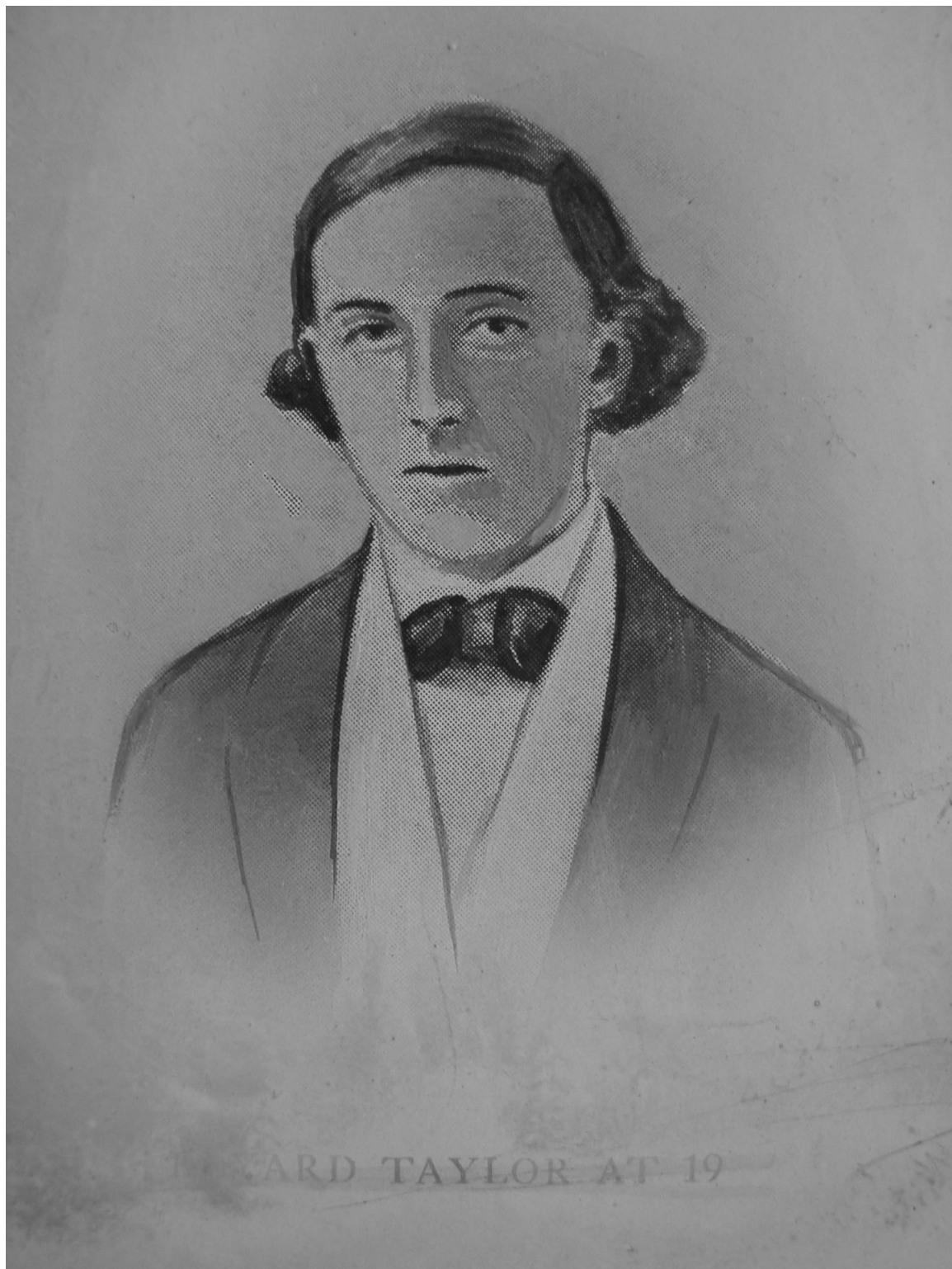
<sup>53</sup> Bayard Taylor, scrapbook, item 57, Box 10, BTP, CUSC.

<sup>54</sup> New York Tribune, 25 December 1878. The poem was written by Thomas Bailey Aldrich.

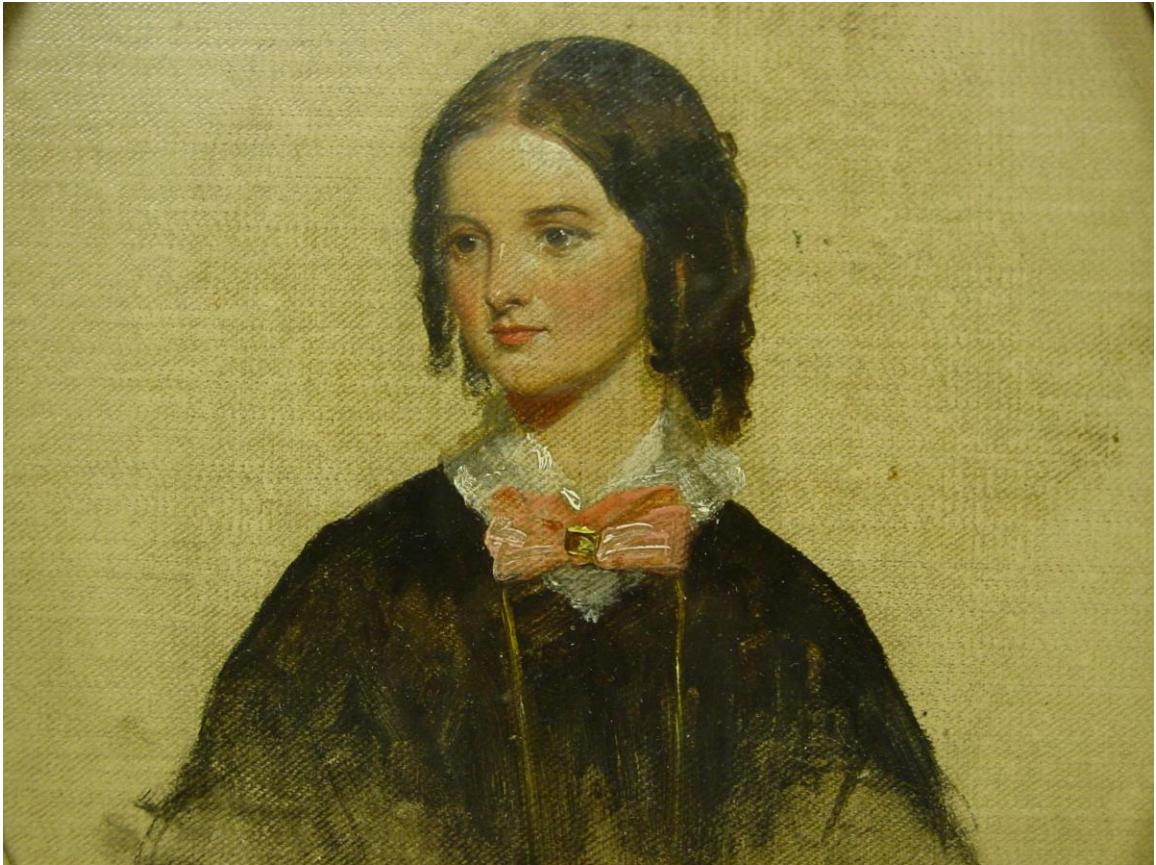
## Appendix A: Photographs and Illustrations



Bayard Taylor's childhood home, the family farm, just outside Kennett Square.  
Bayard Taylor Collection, Chester County Historical Society



Bayard Taylor, c. 1844 at the age of nineteen.  
Bayard Taylor Collection, Chester County Historical Society



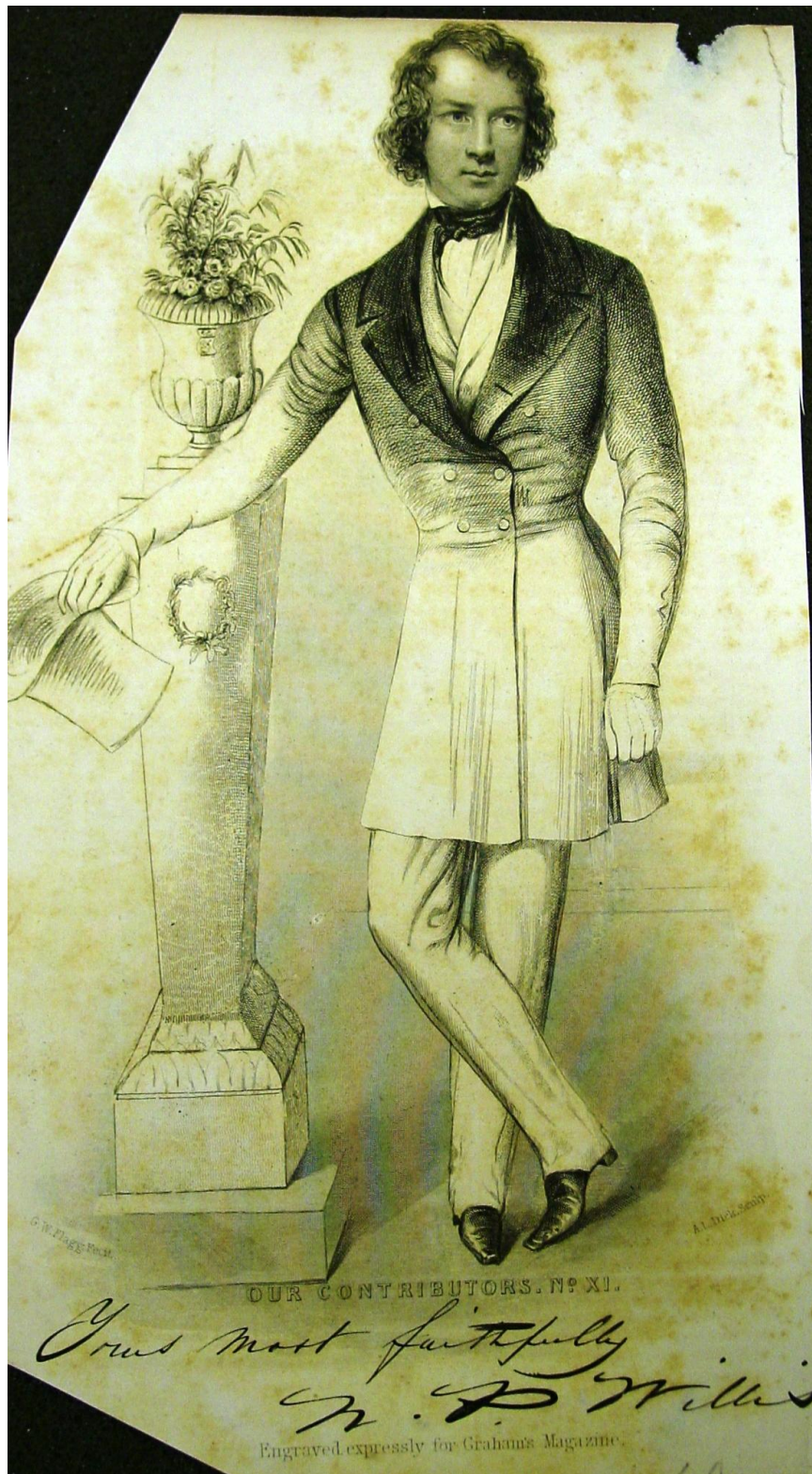
Mary Agnew, Taylor's muse. An idealized painting in the later 1840s.  
Bayard Taylor Collection, Pennsylvania State University Special Collections



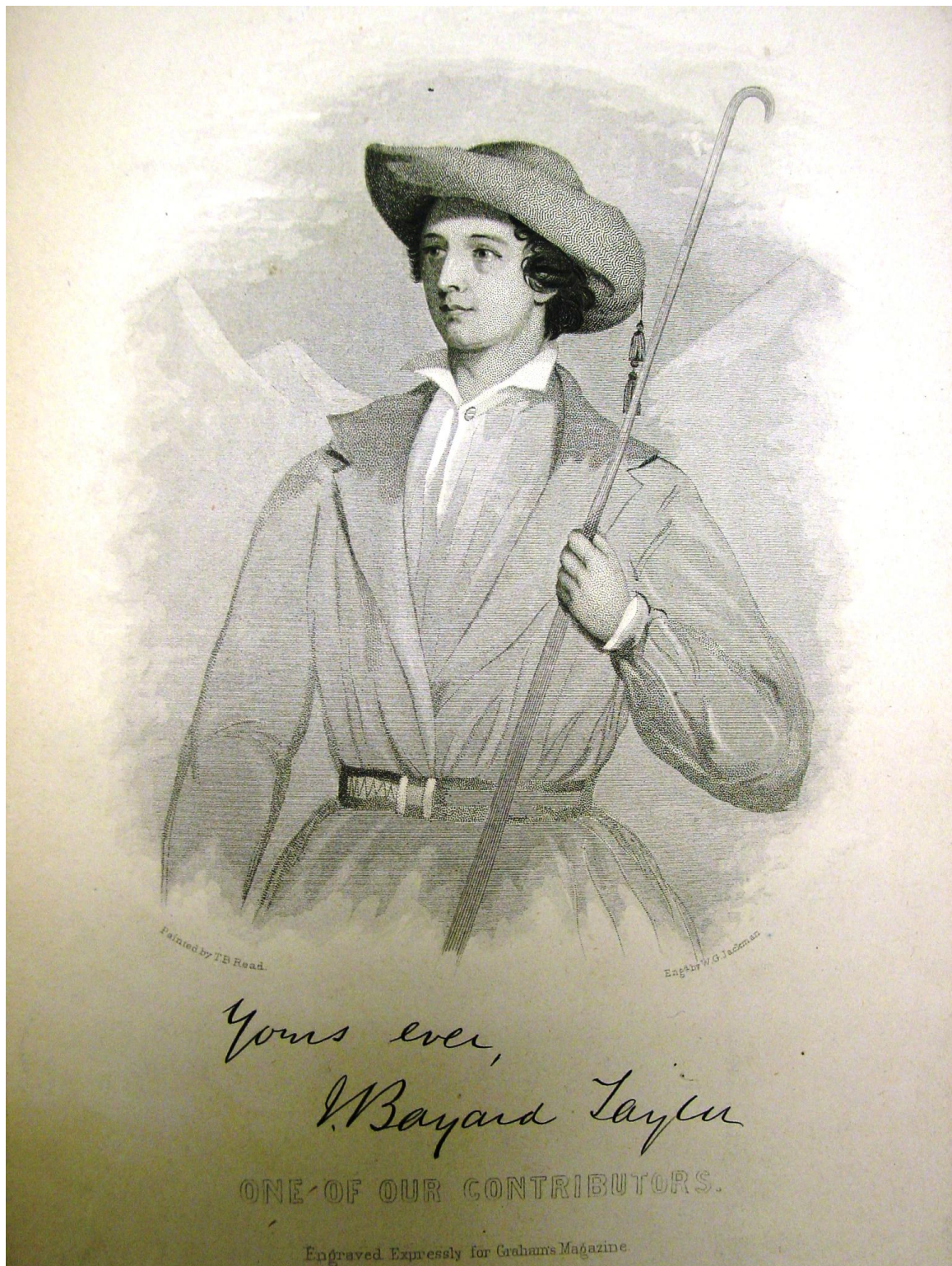
A photograph of the real Mary Agnew, also probably from the late 1840s.  
Bayard Taylor Collection, Chester County Historical Society



Cedarcroft, Taylor's Chester County estate.  
Bayard Taylor Collection, Chester County Historical Society



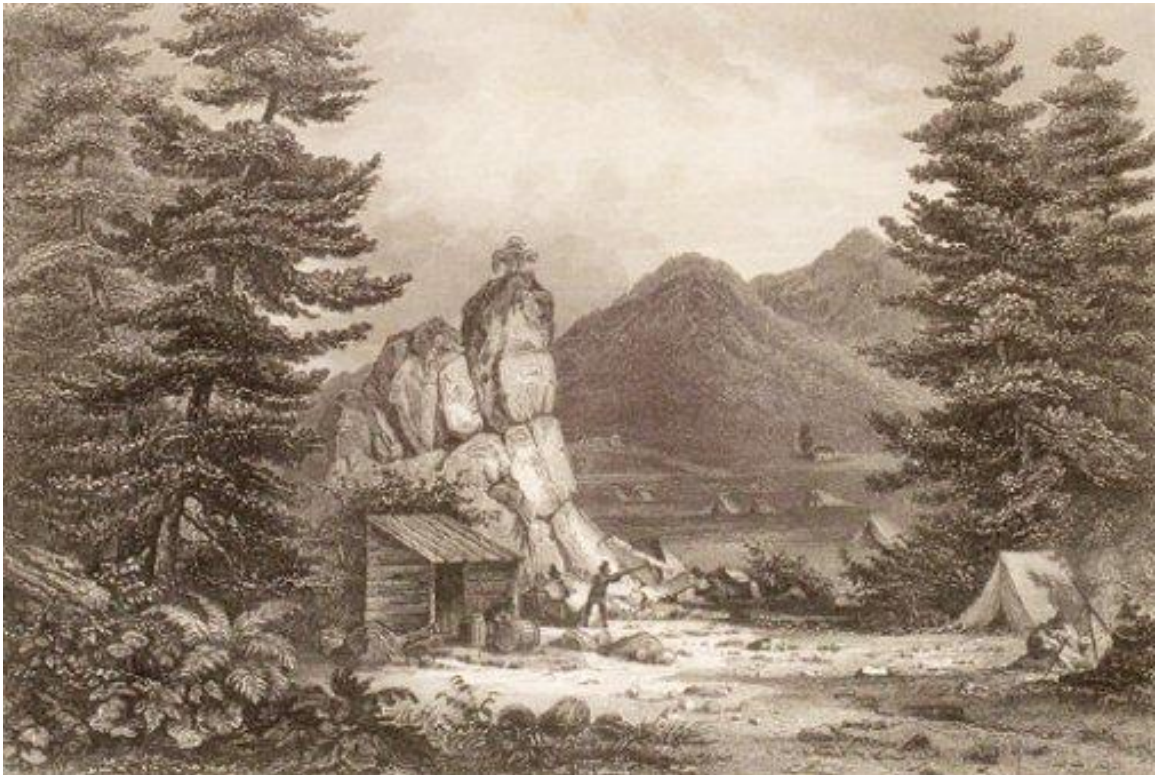
Nathaniel Parker Willis as a young man.  
 Nathaniel Parker Willis Collection, Pennsylvania State University Special Collections



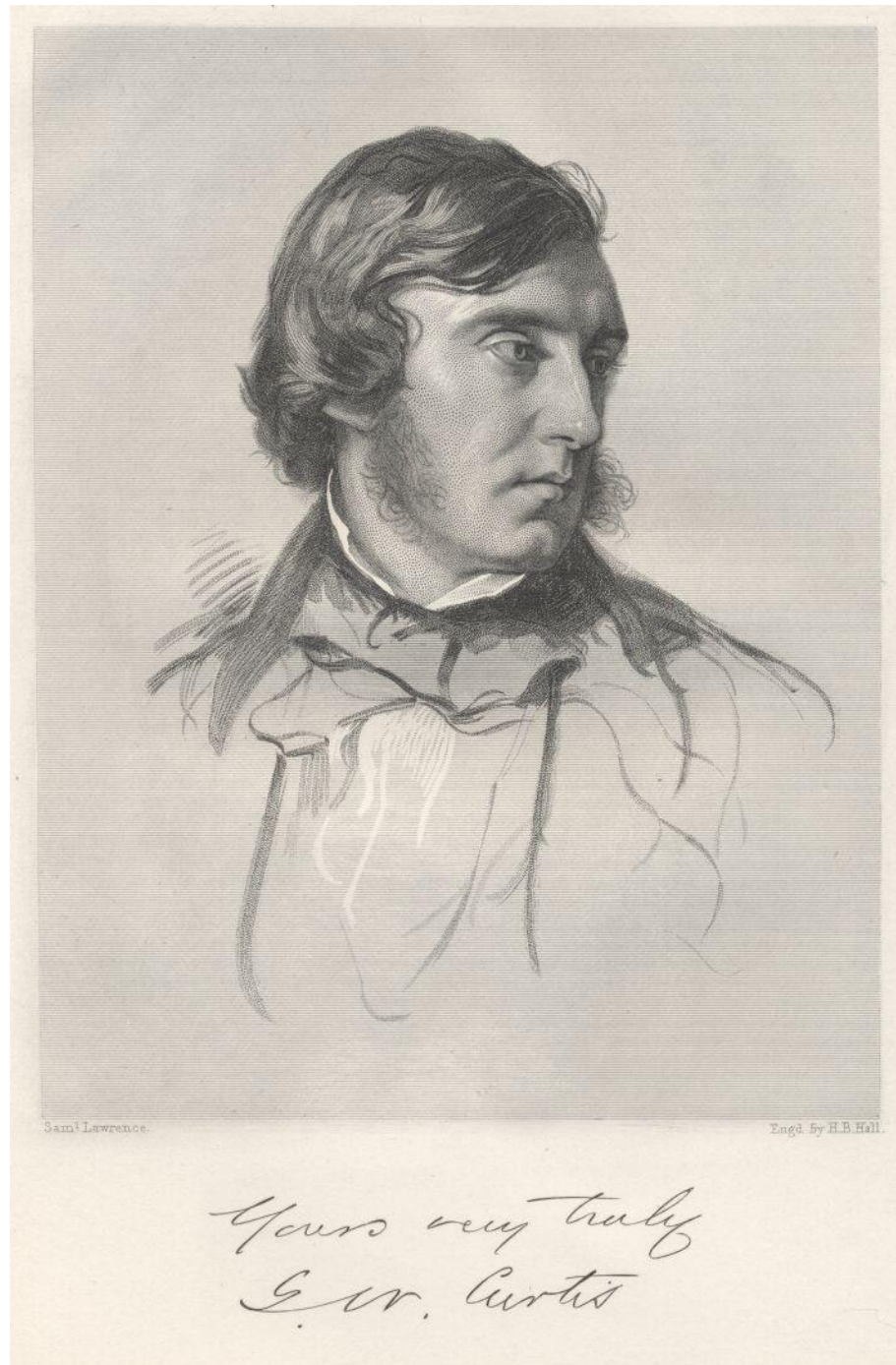
Idealized image of Taylor, the pedestrian traveler, from the inside leaf of Views.



Taylor is second from left in this photo of the Tribune's editorial staff, c. 1847-1848.  
Bayard Taylor Collection, Chester County Historical Society



This picture of Volcano, a California mining camp c.1848, is attributed to Taylor.  
Amador County Historical Society



George William Curtis, the Howadja.

From Studies in American Eloquence: Studies in American Political History, vol. 4  
(New York: G. P. Putnam, 1897)



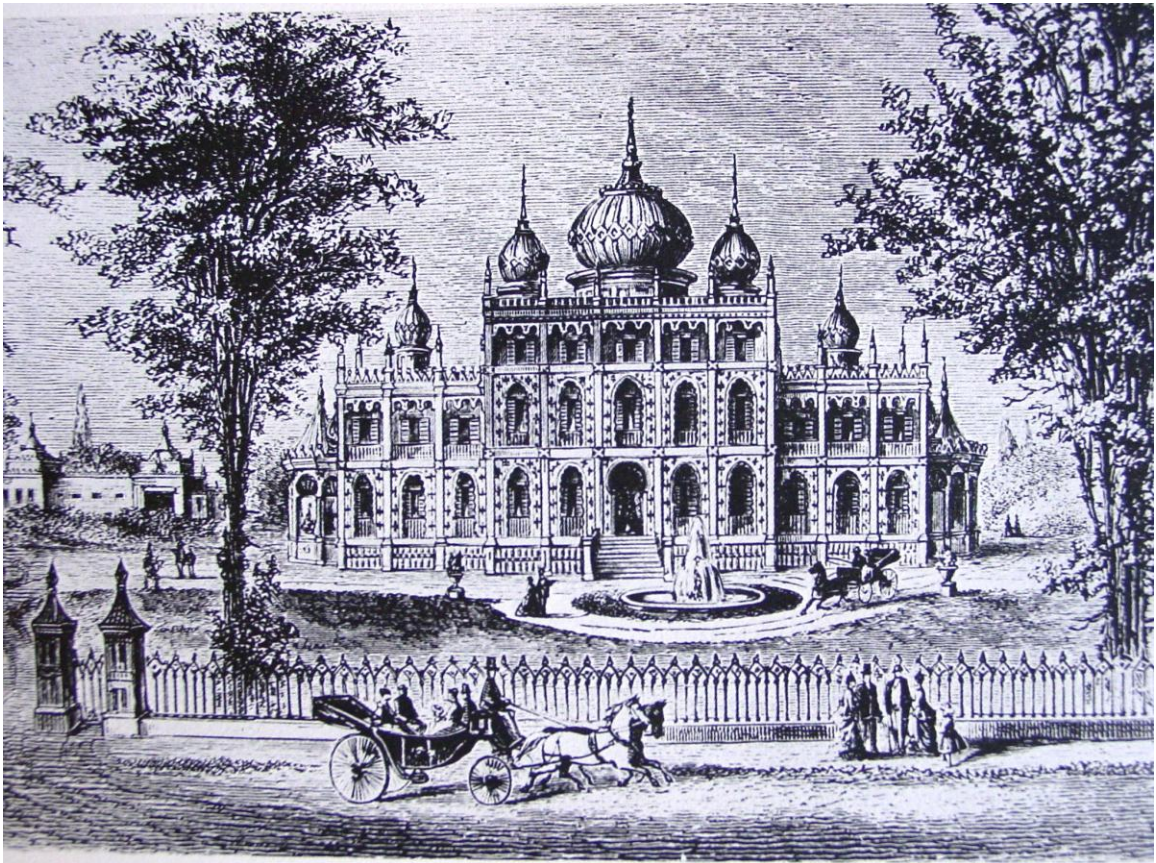
John B. Ireland in "oriental" costume, inside leaf of From Wall Street to Cashmere



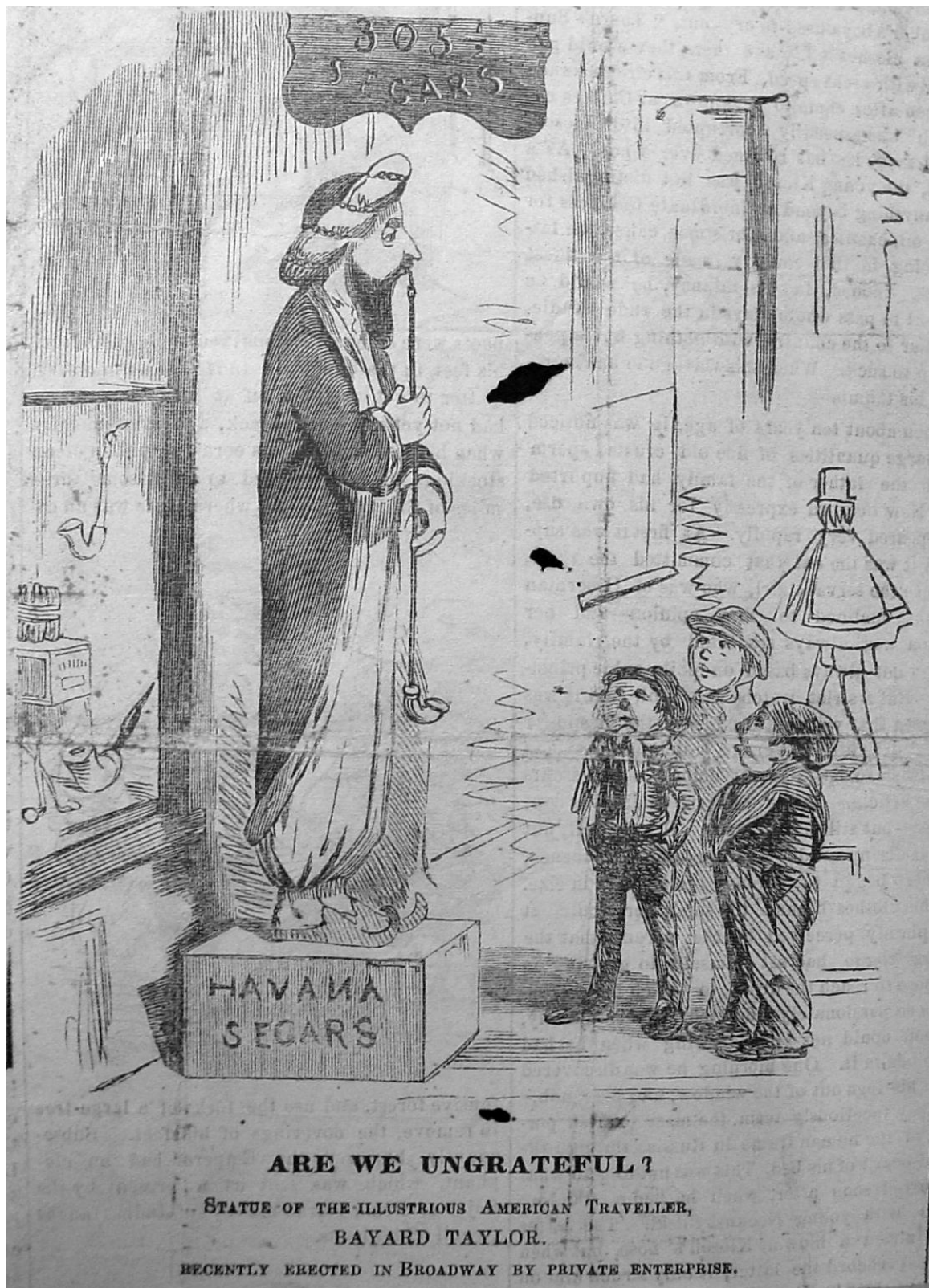
The photograph of Achmet that Taylor kept.  
Bayard Taylor Collection, Bayard Taylor Library (Kennett Square)



Taylor shortly after his return from Asia in the mid-1850s.  
Bayard Taylor Collection, Pennsylvania State University Special Collections



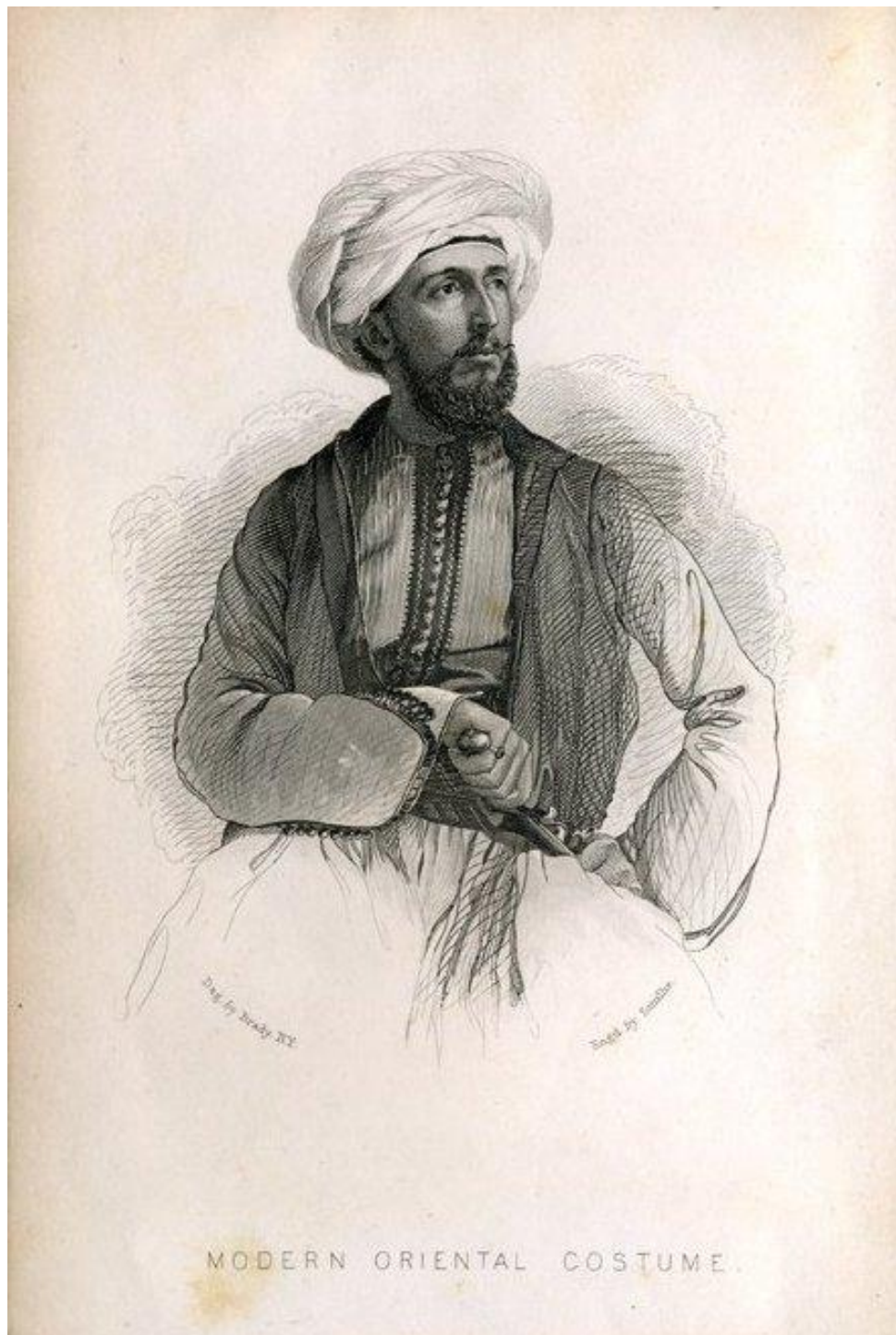
Iranistan  
Barnum Museum, Bridgeport, Connecticut



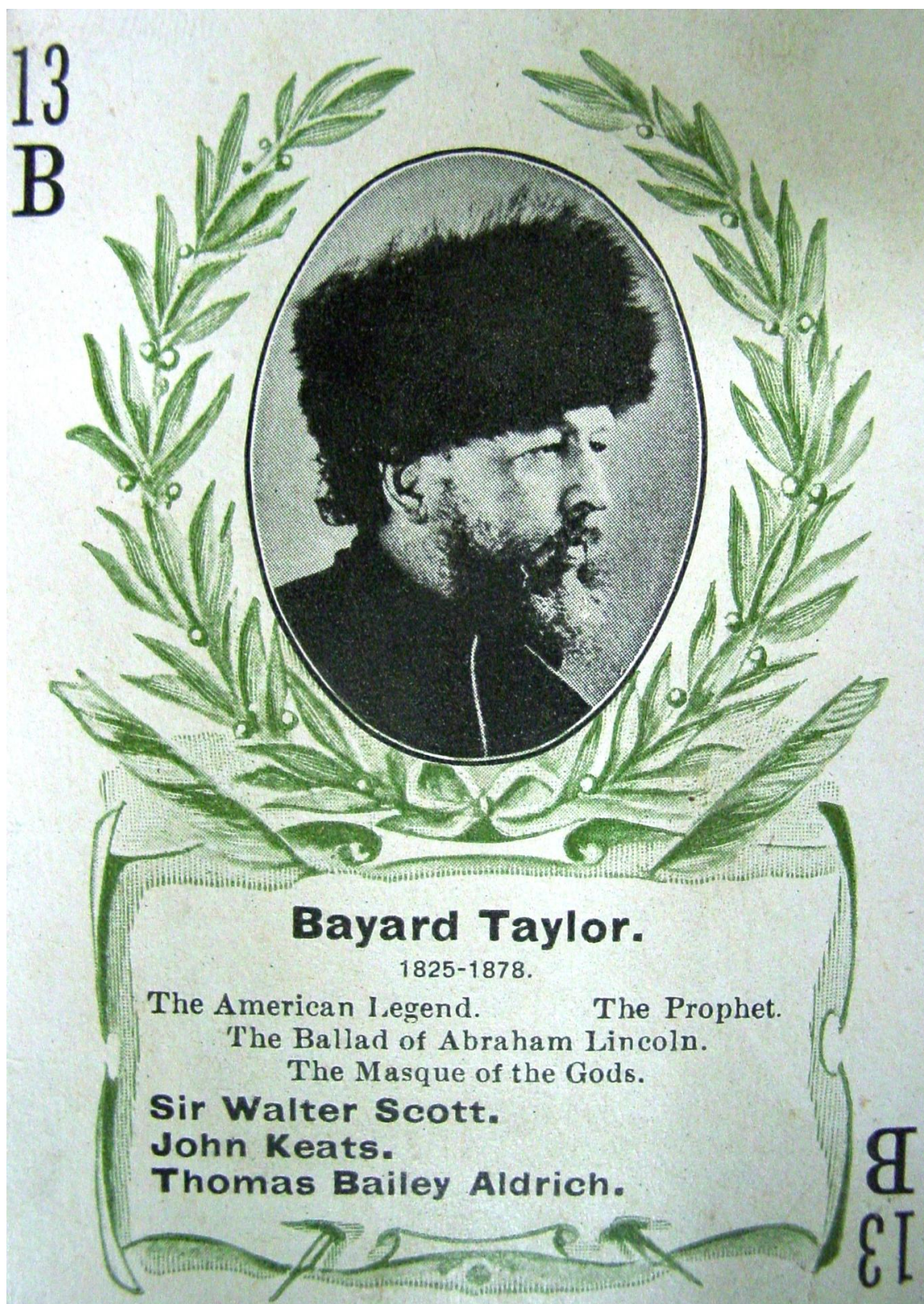
Taylor's image used to sell cigars.  
Bayard Taylor Papers, Cornell University Special Collections



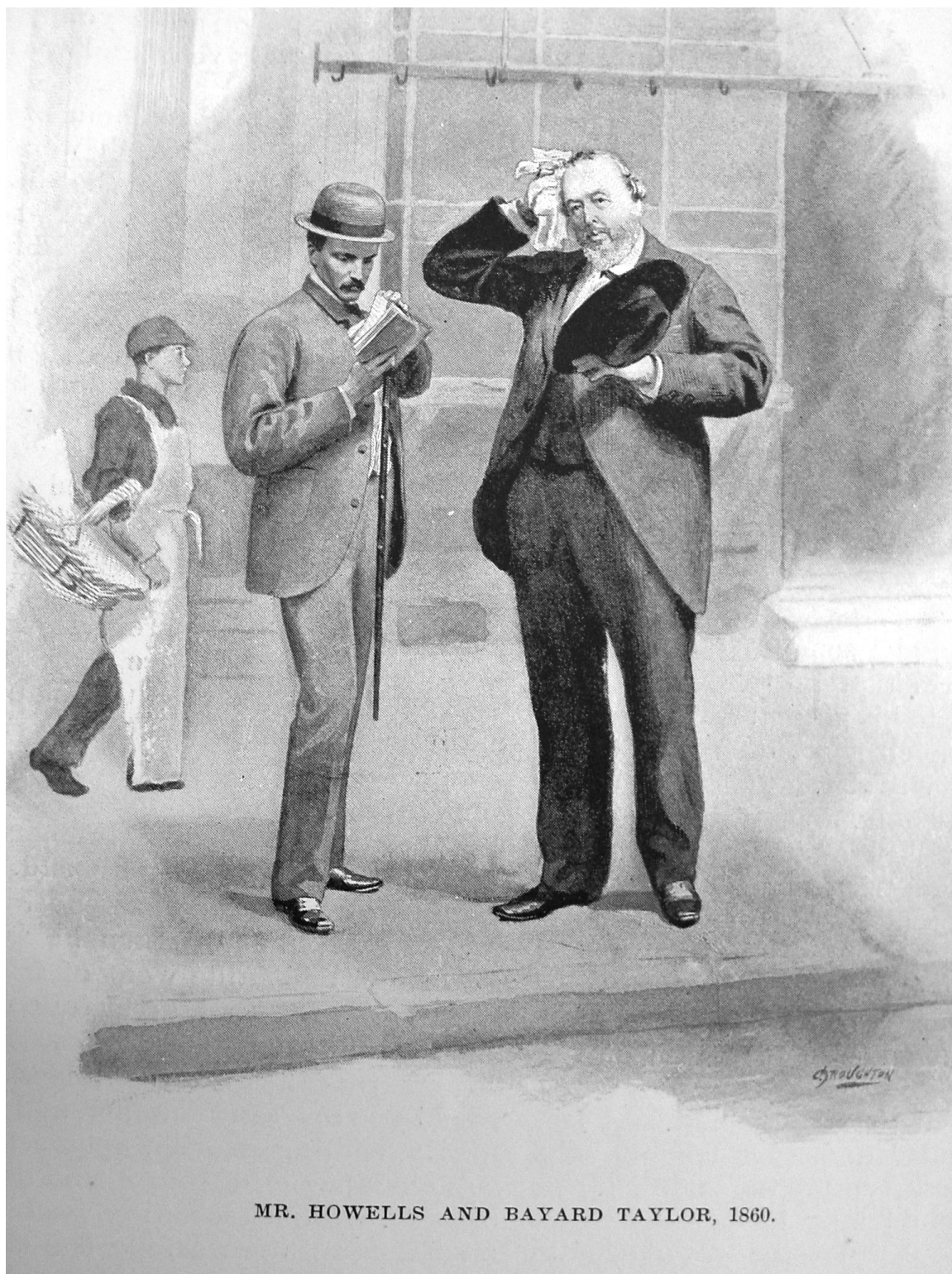
Taylor overlooking Damascus, painting by Albert Hicks.  
National Portrait Gallery



Taylor in "Oriental" costume from the inside leaf of A Journey to Central Africa.



Taylor's card in the "Great Author Game."  
Bayard Taylor Collection, Bayard Taylor Library (Kennett Square)



MR. HOWELLS AND BAYARD TAYLOR, 1860.

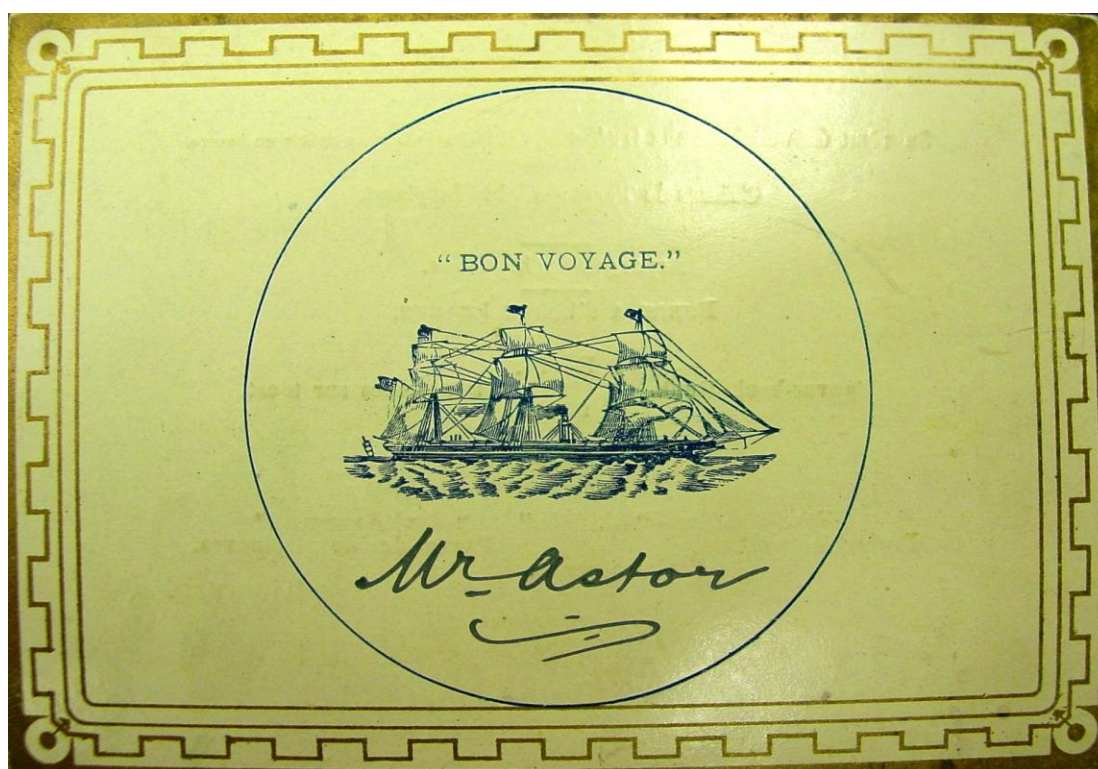
Bayard Taylor Collection, Chester County Historical Society



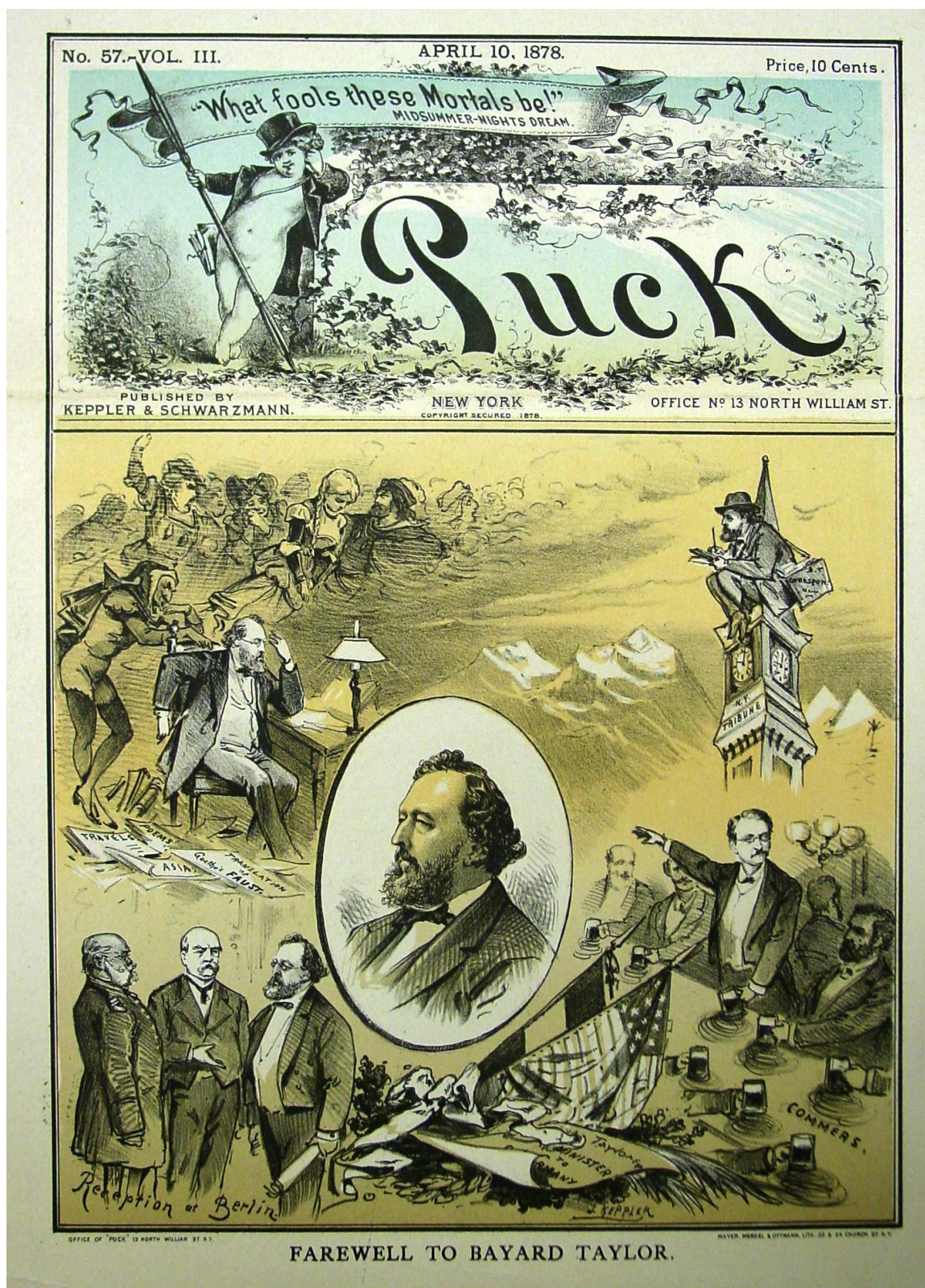
Taylor in the mid-1870s.  
Bayard Taylor Collection, Chester County Historical Society



“America’s Favorites” by Thomas Hicks and engraved by Alexander Hay Ritchie. Taylor is second from right, above his friend Whittier seated in the chair. From William C. King, Portraits and Principles of the World’s Great Men and Women (New York, 1897)



Card for one the farewell dinners given Taylor, signed by John Jacob Astor.  
 Bayard Taylor Papers, Cornell University Special Collections

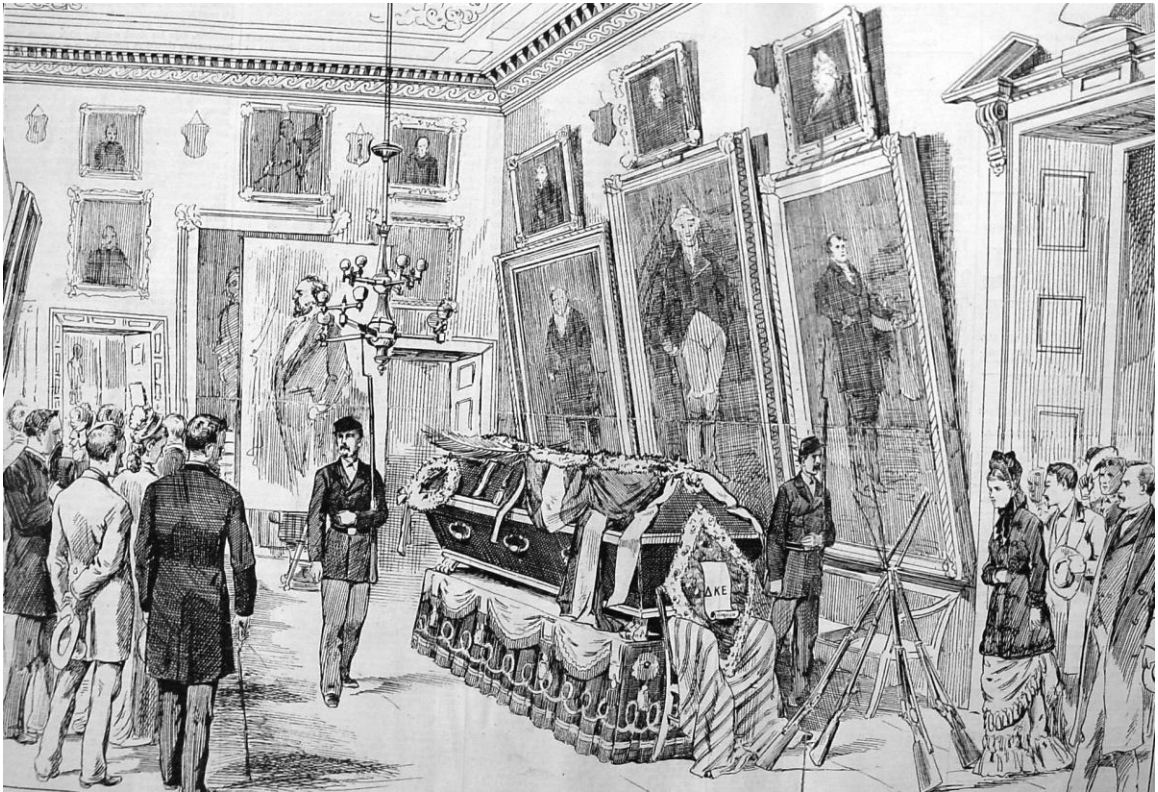


Taylor on the cover of Puck, 1878.

Bayard Taylor Collection, Pennsylvania State University Special Collections



Crowd gathered at the pier upon the arrival of Taylor's casket from Europe.  
Daily Graphic, March 15, 1879



Casket lying in State at the New York City Hall.  
Daily Graphic, March 15, 1879

## **Appendix B: Archival, Photographic and Illustration Acknowledgment**

The author would like to thank and acknowledge the following institutions for access to archival materials and the reproduction of photographs and illustrations:

Amador County Historical Society, Jackson, CA

Barnum Museum, Bridgeport CT

Bayard Taylor Library, Kennett Square, PA

Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA

Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, IL

Cornell University Special Collection, Ithaca, NY

Georgetown University Special Collections, Washington, DC

Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

Huntington Library, San Marino, CA

Library of Congress, Washington, DC

Minnesota Historical Society, Minneapolis, MN

National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC

New York Historical Society, New York, NY

New York Public Library Special Collections, New York, NY

Pennsylvania Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA

Pennsylvania State University Special Collections, University Park, PA

Princeton University Special Collections, Princeton, NJ

Rutgers University Special Collection, New Brunswick, NJ

Smithsonian Museum of American History, Washington, DC

Stockbridge Public Library, Stockbridge, MA

Thomas Cook Archives, London, England

## Curriculum Vita

**James Todd Uhlman**

### Education and Professional History

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 1983-1988 | B.A. in History and Philosophy with Honors, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.                                   |
| 1989-1991 | Teacher of English and History, Tokyo, Japan.  |
| 1995-1996 | Excellence Fellow, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ.  |
| 1996-1998 | Teaching Assistant and Gateway Instructor, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ.                                  |
| 1997-1998 | Excellence Fellow, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ.  |
| 1998-1999 | Excellence Fellow, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ.  |
| 2000-2002 | Fellow, Smithsonian Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.   |
| 2002      | Instructor, Rutgers University, New Brunswick and Newark, NJ.  |
| 2005-2007 | Lecturer in U. S. and World History, Department of History, University of Dayton, Dayton, OH.                      |
| 2007      | Ph.D. in History, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ.   |
| 2007-     | Visiting Assistant Professor of East Asian and World History, Department of History, Miami University, Oxford, OH. |

### Publications

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 2007 | "Travel Literature." <u>The Encyclopedia of the Modern World</u> . Ed. Peter N. Stearns. Oxford University Press. |
| 2007 | "Cook's Tours." <u>The Encyclopedia of the Modern World</u> . Ed. Peter N. Stearns. Oxford University Press.      |