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Alaska and the arctic in the U.S. Imaginary

Ryan Charlton

ALASKA AND THE ARCTIC IN THE U.S. IMAGINARY

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RYAN CHARLTON

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ABSTRACT

Popular narratives of Alaska have long relied on the region's mythical status as the "last frontier," a perception which enfolds Alaska into a continental narrative of U.S. expansion. This frontier image has foreclosed our ability to appreciate the profound instability which the 1867 Alaska Purchase brought into U.S. national discourse at a time when Americans were eager to adopt a fixed national identity. In the three decades following the purchase, Alaska would resist incorporation into the national imaginary, challenging the coherence of U.S. national identity and calling into question foundational myths of the United States as a continental and agrarian nation. Rather than bolstering a vision of Manifest Destiny, nineteenth-century Alaska required Americans to contemplate national futures which stood in stark contrast to that which was seemingly unfolding in the West. While these Arctic visions were often troubling, they also offered Americans an opportunity to rethink their assumptions about the nation. By unmooring the United States from the continent and unsettling the seemingly fixed trajectory of U.S. expansion, the Alaska Purchase enabled Americans to imagine alternative national configurations and social structures. To recover a sense of both the uncertainties and the possibilities which the Far North came to represent, this dissertation analyzes the narrative strategies which Americans used to rationalize the U.S. possession of noncontiguous Arctic territory in the postbellum era. This study explores an array of media—including fiction, newspaper editorials, political cartoons, travel narratives, souvenir postcards, and more—to theorize the impact of the Alaska Purchase on U.S. discourses of nation, region, gender, and race.

DEDICATION

To my family and friends.

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INTRODUCTION

"OUR ARCTIC NATION"

On April 24, 2015, the United States began a two-year chairmanship of the Arctic Council, "the leading intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, Arctic indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants" ("The Arctic Council"). In conjunction, the U.S. Department of State launched an online campaign to bolster the United States' credibility as an Arctic nation. This campaign included an official Arctic twitter account, Arctic-themed posts on whitehouse.gov, and a blog entitled "Our Arctic Nation," which sought to "explore and strengthen America's Arctic identity by drawing attention to the countless...ties that exist between the United States and our globe's northernmost region" ("It's Goodbye"). While this blog highlighted various economic, environmental, and historical links between the U.S. and the Far North, the fact that the State Department felt it necessary to reassure Americans that they are, in fact, living in an Arctic nation betrays the tenuous nature of this identity in the public imagination.

According to surveys conducted in 2015 and 2017, Americans on average "mildly disagree" with the assertion that "[t]he United States is an Arctic Nation with broad and fundamental interests in the Arctic regions." Twenty-seven percent of respondents indicated that they fully disagree with this statement (Hamilla 1–2). Why is this? If the U.S. became an Arctic nation with the purchase of Alaska, as the State Department blog suggests, why are Americans so reluctant to acknowledge this historical fact? The answer, of course, is that the Arctic

nationalism in question is not a mere matter of territory—though territorial claims form the basis of it—but also a matter of feeling, one that remains largely absent from the United States despite Americans' enduring obsession with Alaska. That the American public can simultaneously fixate on Alaska and yet remain hesitant, even unwilling, to identify the United States as a nation "with broad and fundamental interests in the Arctic" is a paradox which this dissertation seeks to illuminate.

Though narratives and images of Alaska have long been extremely popular, they have overwhelmingly relied—and continue to rely—on the region's mythical status as the "last frontier," a perception which emerged in the decades following the 1897 Klondike gold rush. By enfolding Alaska into a continental narrative of U.S. expansion, the "last frontier" identity has allowed Americans to imagine the region as a place where familiar national mythologies are re-enacted as they once were, so the story goes, on the western frontier. If Americans as a whole fail to see the United States as an Arctic nation, this is partially a result of the fact that the incorporation of Alaska ultimately saw the region rebranded in terms that conformed to pre-existing national expectations and not the other way around. Scholars have long identified this transformation, deconstructing the myth of the "last frontier" and tracing the ways it has been deployed in various political contexts across the twentieth century.[1]

Nineteenth-century perceptions of Alaska have been largely overshadowed in the process. Few scholars have examined the national interest in pre-gold rush Alaska, and those that have often continue privileging the Klondike gold rush as the defining moment of Alaskan history.[2] Though not surprising, given the profound impact which the gold rush had on Alaska

[1] See Coates, *The Trans-Alaska Pipeline Controversy*; Kollin, *Nature's State*; Willis, *Alaska's Place in the West*.

[2] Perhaps the most substantial examination of the national interest in pre-gold rush Alaska is Robert Campbell's *In Darkest Alaska*, which explores how tourism and the "flood of travel writing" it produced "helped fix a particular

and its relationship to the rest of the United States, this retrospective imposition of the Klondike narrative obscures as much as it reveals. After all, when Americans imagined Alaska in the three decades following the purchase of the territory, they did so without any knowledge of the gold strike that would transform the region into a viable part of the nation. They may have hoped for as much, but as we will see, such optimism was typically short-lived. Reducing nineteenth-century Alaskan history to a teleological narrative that culminates with the Klondike gold rush forecloses our ability to appreciate the profound instability which the Alaska Purchase brought into U.S. national discourse at a time when Americans were eager to adopt a fixed national identity.

As Paul Giles observes, through the early decades of the nineteenth century, the United States' "sense of national identity was as uncertain, as provisional, as its cartography" (*Global Remapping*, 5). Following the conclusion of the Civil War, however, changes in "the cultural and political landscape of the United States"—aided by technological advancements in transportation and communication—facilitated the geographical consolidation of the nation and its transformation "from a series of local economies into an imposing continental edifice" (9). Perceptions of the United States as a coherent national space solidified in tandem with the conviction that there existed identifiable national values inherent in the land itself. The borders of the nation were thus increasingly imagined not as arbitrary or contingent constructs but rather as meaningful delineations of a distinct national character made manifest in the natural world.

In 1867, against this backdrop of national consolidation, the U.S. government purchased 586,412 square miles of noncontiguous territory from Russia, extending the national domain both beyond the Arctic Circle and into the Eastern Hemisphere. For the next thirty years,

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vision of the north in the national imaginations of Americans" (12). Though Campbell brilliantly debunks the notion that nineteenth-century Americans were generally unmindful of Alaska in the years before the gold rush, he ultimately "asserts that travel and tourism served as a necessary 'prequel' to the story of the Klondike" (9).

Alaska would resist incorporation into the national imaginary, challenging the coherence of U.S. national identity and calling into question foundational myths of the United States as a continental and agrarian nation. In doing so, the Alaska Purchase also threatened to demystify the Arctic itself. Long imagined as a realm outside of the political world, the Far North provided nineteenth-century explorers a symbolic stage from which to rehearse reassuring fantasies of national manhood. By transforming Arctic space into a territorial possession, the acquisition of Alaska threatened to supplant the heroic masculinity of Arctic exploration with a distressing exhibition of the nation's imperial shortcomings. As Americans found themselves largely unable to settle the territory in subsequent decades, the U.S. possession of Alaska came to exacerbate the very anxieties which Arctic expedition narratives sought to assuage.

Alaska and the Arctic in the U.S. Imaginary examines the ways in which Alaska disrupted the triumphant narratives of U.S. nationalism in the postbellum era. Rather than bolstering a vision of national coherence and Manifest Destiny, nineteenth-century Alaska required Americans to contemplate national futures which stood in stark contrast to that which was seemingly unfolding in the West. Though these Arctic visions were often troubling, they also offered Americans an opportunity to rethink their assumptions about the nation. By unmooring the United States from the continent and unsettling the seemingly fixed trajectory of U.S. expansion, the Alaska Purchase enabled Americans to imagine alternative national configurations and social structures. In order to recover a sense of both the uncertainties and the possibilities which Alaska came to represent, this dissertation analyzes the narrative strategies which Americans used to rationalize the U.S. possession of noncontiguous Arctic territory in the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction eras. To that end, I explore an array of media—including fiction, newspaper editorials, political cartoons, travel narratives, souvenir images, and

more—to theorize the impact of the Alaska Purchase on U.S. discourses of nation, region, gender, and race.

Chapter One lays the groundwork for this dissertation by discussing the ways Americans interpreted the 1867 U.S. purchase of Alaska throughout the late nineteenth century. Although scholars have often assumed that Alaska was largely ignored by both the federal government and the U.S. public in the years before the Klondike gold rush, nineteenth-century periodicals tell a different story. Focusing specifically on the images of Alaska that circulated in the propaganda of the Reconstruction era, I argue that the Alaska purchase posed a conceptual problem for Americans long accustomed to thinking of the United States in continental and settler colonial terms. Though Alaska would become known as the "last frontier" in the twentieth century, in the nineteenth century Alaska's noncontiguity and resistance to agricultural settlement posed a challenge to the model of national space embodied by the West. To demonstrate this, I explore how Alaska appears in literary texts of the nineteenth century, specifically those of writers frequently associated with the local color movement. I argue that as local color fiction narrated the consolidation of the United States in the wake of the Civil War, Alaska did not seem a part of the nation and thus could not fit the local color formula, forcing writers to break with the genre in order to construct narratives of the territory.

Chapter Two argues that the Alaska purchase provided Americans with an imaginative space through which to contemplate racial and national decline in the late nineteenth century. I begin by exploring how the negative associations of the Arctic following the disappearance of British explorer Sir John Franklin were transferred to Alaska during the Reconstruction era. As Arctic images were increasingly deployed as a means of thinking about the nation, Americans began to reevaluate longstanding geographical assumptions about the integrity of the continent

and its ability to delineate national and foreign space. I then examine how and why Constance Fenimore Woolson and Sarah Orne Jewett embed Arctic subplots within their regional fictions of tropical Florida and rural New England. I argue that their representations of failed Arctic expeditions take on national significance when read in light of the United States' prolonged frustrations in Alaska. Together, these narratives suggest that Alaska's uncertain future came to embody broader national and racial anxieties in the late nineteenth century.

Chapter Three explores fictional and nonfictional accounts of white women who traveled to the Far North in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I argue that the presence of white women in a space long imagined as the exclusive domain of men forced Americans to contemplate the "New Woman" of the emerging feminist movement. This chapter begins with an examination of Jack London's first novel *A Daughter of the Snows*, which takes up "the woman question" against the backdrop of the Klondike gold rush. I argue that London's failure to sustain a feminist vision of the novel's female protagonist illustrates the ways in which the racial ideology of U.S. imperialism short-circuits efforts to imagine a truly liberated female subject. Next I explore the Alaskan fiction of actress and suffragette Elizabeth Robins to show how Robins's attempt to construct a feminist narrative of Alaska collapses under the genre expectations of the imperial romance novel. Finally, this chapter concludes by examining the writing of Josephine Diebitsch Peary, who accompanied her husband, famed North Pole explorer Robert Peary, on multiple excursions to the Far North. I argue that by fashioning herself as a paragon of domesticity—and fixating on the whiteness of her Arctic-born daughter—Peary supplies a palatable narrative of Arctic exploration that mitigates the gender and racial anxieties which her presence in the Far North generates.

Chapter Four examines how the racial category of "the Eskimo" complicated the binary logic of Jim Crow in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first half of this chapter traces the evolving image of "the Eskimo" in nineteenth-century U.S. culture and the various representational modes in which it appeared. I begin by discussing the role Arctic expedition narratives played in establishing the Eskimo as an object of white fascination. I then turn to the living ethnological exhibits—specifically the popular "Eskimo Village" attractions—which swept the nation following the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. I argue that although these exhibits reaffirmed many of the racial stereotypes of the era, they also enabled indigenous performers to manipulate and subvert these stereotypes in profound ways. The second half of this chapter considers ways in which African American writers engaged with the image of the Eskimo. I examine an episode from Sutton Griggs 1905 novel *The Hindered Hand* in which a mixed-race character escapes a lynch mob by disguising himself as an Eskimo and fleeing to the Arctic. I argue that in this moment Griggs highlights the unreliability of Jim Crow racial categories while also inviting his readers to contemplate the varied ways in which African Americans strategically perform these identities to their advantage. Finally, I analyze how Matthew Henson, the first African American Arctic explorer, negotiates the white-supremacist logic of the Arctic expedition narrative by strategically distancing and aligning himself with the Inuit in different historical contexts.

This dissertation concludes with a coda discussing the ways in which climate change is recontextualizing U.S. narratives of the Arctic in the twenty-first century. While the Far North has assumed a very different set of associations over the last several decades, I argue that national narratives of the Arctic can still provide a useful means of interpreting the transnational resonance of climate change. To demonstrate this, I briefly discuss British filmmaker Isaac

Julien's *True North*, an installation of film and photography which reimagines the story of Matthew Henson, tacitly drawing connections between U.S. imperialism and climate change.

CHAPTER I

IMAGINING ALASKA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In February 1869, the *Overland Monthly* published an article by U.S. Navy surgeon C. Delavan Bloodgood describing the formal transfer of Alaska from Russia to the United States. Bloodgood's account of the transfer ceremony is notably underwhelming: on October 18, 1867, Russian and U.S. officials met at Sitka, where Russian commissioner Alexis Pestchouroff "ordered the Russian flag hauled down, and thereby with brief declaration transferred and delivered the territory of Alaska to the United States." At this point, cannons "fired the international salute; a brief reply of acceptance was made, as the stars and stripes were run up and similarly saluted—and we stood upon the soil of the United States." By concluding his description of the paltry theatrics of the transfer ceremony with a quip about the Alaskan soil, Bloodgood foregrounds the disconnect between the symbolic gestures attending the U.S. purchase of Alaska and the material realities of the territory which had not changed with the flag. The next sentence of the article heightens this sense of irony, informing the reader that "[t]he town of Sitka…in its every appearance and arrangement, was totally un-American" (179). Bloodgood devotes the remainder of the article to a description of Sitka that focuses primarily on the exotic qualities of the town and the customs of its Russian and indigenous inhabitants. In doing so, he constructs an image of Alaska so profoundly "un-American" that one might expect him to harbor some degree of opposition to the purchase of a territory so incongruent with the rest of the nation. Yet this is not the case. "The cession of the Russian possessions in North

America to the United States…gratified the American heart," writes Bloodgood (175). He even suggests that the U.S. acquisition of Alaska warrants renewed discussions concerning "the political future of British Columbia," which now constitutes "an irritating geographic wedge in our extending coast line" (176).

Bloodgood's enthusiasm was not uncommon in the wake of the Alaska purchase.[3] For many, the acquisition of so vast a territory a mere two years after the end of the Civil War seemed an indication of national ascendency. Though some denounced the purchase as an act of colonialism, many Americans enjoyed the newfound sense of imperial legitimacy it afforded. As an 1869 article in *Harper's Weekly* observed, "[o]ur national vanity was somewhat gratified in knowing that…we had become possessors of a region ten times as large as New York or Virginia, and about equal to France, Germany, and Great Britain" ("An Artist in Alaska" 589). Yet as Bloodgood's remark about the soil attests, even those in favor of the purchase struggled to rationalize the acquisition of over half a million square miles of noncontiguous arctic and subarctic territory. Though Alaska would eventually be "conceptually attached" to the rest of the nation through the rhetoric of the "last frontier," this perception would not solidify in the public imagination until the twentieth century, well after the Klondike gold rush of 1897 reshaped national estimates of the territory (Willis 14).[4] While Alaska's national significance remains largely associated with its status as "the last frontier," pre-gold rush Alaska rarely appears in

[3] Historians have long debunked the myth that there existed a widespread opposition to the purchase. As early as 1958, historian Richard E. Welch Jr. concluded that "a majority of the American press seems either to have favored the treaty or at least not to have been opposed to it" (492–3). Objections to the purchase were, according to Welch, the opinions of a vocal minority, not a reflection of popular sentiment. Many historians have concurred with Welch's assessment.

[4] Historians have often argued that "Alaska is an extension of the American West, not an exception to it," citing the economic, political, and cultural similarities between the two regions (Haycox 159–62). My point is not to suggest that Alaskan history cannot be interpreted in this manner but rather that this perception, however apparent in hindsight, was far from self-evident in the nineteenth century.

national histories of the United States in more than a cursory account of the circumstances surrounding the purchase of the territory. The three decades of Alaskan history between the purchase and the gold rush are generally ignored or dismissed as uneventful and of little interest to those without special investments in the region. When discussed at all, nineteenth-century Alaska has been portrayed as "a forgotten and abandoned province," overshadowed by the more pressing concerns of the postbellum era.[5]

Yet while it is true that the federal government was preoccupied in the late nineteenth century, Lee A. Farrow's recent history of the Alaska purchase notes that "there was actually an ongoing attempt by Washington…to create offices and positions that would bring order and organization" to Alaska (82). Likewise, the preponderance of reports and articles about the territory that filled the pages of late-nineteenth-century periodicals attests to a growing interest in Alaska among a significant portion of the population. Alaska's absence from histories of the nineteenth-century United States is largely a result of the fact that it disrupts the "triumphant transcontinental story" which Rachel St. John identifies as the dominant narrative of U.S. national expansion. "U.S. historians," she explains, "have mostly told the stories of U.S. expansionist successes…disproportionately focus[ing] on the territories the United States did acquire" and paying far less attention to its expansionist failures (40). As a successful territorial acquisition that became a painful reminder of the nation's failure to establish a unified continental empire, Alaska can neither be entirely included nor omitted from this triumphant narrative of U.S. expansion. For this reason, the history of Alaska has been told unevenly, with inordinate attention paid to moments in which the U.S ownership of Alaska could be celebrated as a national victory: the moment of the purchase and the Klondike gold rush.

[5] Ernest Gruening, Governor of the Alaska Territory from 1939 until 1953, cites "[t]he nation's greater concern for settling the West, Alaska's ill-founded repute as an uninhabitable wasteland, and Federal neglect" as reasons why Alaska lay "dormant till the close of the century" (*An Alaskan Reader* xiv).

Scholars of nineteenth-century U.S. literature have neglected Alaska for a related reason: it rarely appears in the era's fiction. Although stories of life in the Alaskan wilderness—particularly those of Jack London—would captivate the public imagination at the turn of the century, Alaska is remarkably absent from the local color fiction which dominated U.S. literature in the previous three decades.[6] Despite the enormous demand for regional literature and the consequent "search for new locales by which to renew" the genre (Broadhead 119), Alaska did not seem to belong within the nation that was emerging and was not incorporated into the map of national space which the genre was creating.[7] However, Alaska's absence from local color fiction should not be misinterpreted as an indication that U.S. writers—or readers—were uninterested in Alaska. Rather, many writers commonly associated with the regional fiction movement wrote about Alaska in ways that drew them out of the genre. This chapter considers the ways that Americans imagined Alaska and its relationship to the nation in the years before it became legible as the "last frontier." First, I explore the early images of Alaska that emerged in the wake of the purchase. Though often dismissed by scholars as ephemeral propaganda, these images had a profound impact on the ways Americans perceived Alaska for the duration of the nineteenth century. I then explore the ways that writers of regional fiction engage with Alaska as a space which resisted the processes of national consolidation which the genre narrates.

[6] James Wickersham's *Bibliography of Alaskan Literature, 1724–1924* and Melvin B. Ricks's *Basic Bibliography of Alaskan Literature* identify a combined total of nine fictional texts set in Alaska published between the 1867 purchase of the territory and the 1896 Klondike gold strike.

[7] Following Bill Hardwig, I intentionally use the terms "local color" and "regional fiction" interchangeably. Though some critics have used these terms to distinguish different subgenres of writing, Hardwig notes that such anachronistic distinctions distort the historical context in which these texts emerged. For more on the usage of these terms, see Hardwig, *Upon Provincialism*, 12–14.

The Icebox Image of Alaska

When the United States purchased Alaska in 1867, the U.S. public knew almost nothing about the territory, and what little it knew of the Far North was derived largely from Arctic expedition narratives, a genre predicated on the assumption that the Far North was virtually uninhabitable. As Russell A. Potter explains, these expedition narratives were dramatized across a wide variety of media—print, book and newspaper illustrations, paintings, panoramas, magic-lantern shows—so that by the mid-nineteenth century Americans imagined the Arctic according to a "long-established visual vocabulary, which included tremendous icebergs, ferocious polar bears, friendly 'Esquimaux,' struggling explorers, and ice-bound ships" (121). Opponents of the Alaska purchase were quick to attach the imagery of Arctic exploration to the newly acquired northern territory. On April 1, 1867, the *New-York Tribune* declared that "the announcement" of the purchase "conjures up…visions of a cold, barren, and uninhabited region…celebrated only because Capt. [Frederick William] Beechy [*sic*] and Sir John Franklin voyaged on its coasts" ("The Ceded Territory"). Three days later *The Nation* made a similar claim, describing Alaska as "a frozen wilderness, better known to arctic explorers and whalers than to most other men, and probably of no possible value to any men but them" ("The Week" 266). By presenting Alaska as the perpetual domain of Arctic explorers, these editors position the territory inexorably outside of the United States, an assessment in keeping with longstanding perceptions of the Arctic as a space outside of the political world. As Jen Hill explains, this notion of the Far North as a space separate from "the problematic political, racial, and economic relations of empire" developed in the early nineteenth century as "a counter to the troubling moral questions raised by" British colonialism in other parts of the world. As "neither colonial nor national space in any traditional sense," the Arctic "was for Britons a place to reify, stabilize, and naturalize a definition of

Britishness that could provide an antidote to increasingly unstable and multiple versions of Britishness that existed at home and in the colonies" (12, 15). When the U.S. entered the world of Arctic exploration in the mid-nineteenth century, it did so to similar effect. Michael Robinson notes that while growing sectional tensions threatened the future of the United States like never before, Arctic exploration offered "a happy distraction" capable of "rally[ing] Americans together at a time when they were tearing themselves apart" (12).

The acquisition of Alaska thus posed a conceptual problem for nineteenth-century Americans, long accustomed to imagining the Arctic in much the same way as the twentieth century imagined "the moon and outer space" (Potter 3). As Hsuan Hsu observes, the history of the nineteenth century United States is characterized by "geographically jarring events" which exposed the overlapping scales of national, transnational, and subnational space. Moments of profound geographical transformation highlighted the "instability of national boundaries" and the tenuous "feelings of spatial belonging" that corresponded to them (6–7). As part of the North American continent and an archipelago, Alaska straddles the scale by which many Americans distinguished between domestic and foreign space in the late nineteenth century. In order to restore a sense of geographic stability to the national domain, Americans incorporated Alaska into a continental narrative of the United States. As Eric T. L. Love explains, expansionist projects that remained "bound to the continent" required little explanation "to a citizenry thoroughly familiar with and invested in the act and discourses of landed expansion" (31). And as Rachel St. John reminds us, "when mid-nineteenth-century Americans referred to the 'continent' they imagined a space that extended from north to south as well as east to west…For continental-minded expansionists it was as important that the United States stretch from the North Pole to the Isthmus of Darien as from the Atlantic to the Pacific" (40–1). Initially, then,

the fact that Alaska was not contiguous with any part of the United States did not matter to Americans who could imagine the acquisition of Alaska as the first step in a broader expansionist program that would see the annexation of British Columbia and the establishment of a unified continental empire at a later date.[8]

However, when British Columbia joined the Confederation of Canada in 1871, shattering U.S. fantasies of a unified continental empire, Alaska's separation from the rest of the nation became a serious obstacle to the conceptual integrity of the nation. After all, European Americans had identified the United States with the continent since the Revolutionary period. As James D. Drake has demonstrated, "metageographical assumptions about the continent as a naturally unified entity" were instrumental to the American independence movement and the political development of the young republic: "Perceiving the continent as a unified entity meant that if politics were to conform to nature—an ideal held by many—North America ought to be inhabited by one people, under a single power" (10–3). Myra Jehlen has argued that European settlers of America "saw themselves as building their civilization out of nature itself, as neither the analogue nor the translation of Natural Law but its direct expression." This identification with "the physical fact of the continent" allowed Americans to view the nation as an organic embodiment of nature as opposed to the historically contingent political and social orders of Europe (3-5). By disrupting Americans' ability to identify nation with continent, Alaska's noncontiguity threatened to undermine the cherished fantasy of the United States as, in Perry Miller's words, "Nature's nation," "a nation that was, above all other nations, embedded in

[8] One of the first books published about Alaska, Frederick Whymper's 1869 *Travel and Adventure in the Territory of Alaska*, notes that there were "many, both in England and America, who look[ed] on" the U.S. purchase of Alaska "as the first move towards an American occupation of the whole continent, and who fores[aw] that Canada, and British America generally, w[ould] sooner or later become part of the United States" (87).

Nature" (201). Thus, while early objections to the purchase were the opinions of a vocal minority, they came to embody anxieties held by a growing portion of the population.

As Peter Coates observes, the first image of Alaska to take hold of the national imagination was that of the "icebox," which reduced Alaska to an Arctic wasteland, devoid of any resource that would justify the cost of purchasing and administering the territory (30). This image achieved currency in the scathing newspaper editorials that circulated in the wake of the purchase, branding Alaska with a set of derogatory epithets which emphasized the perceived worthlessness of the territory and its resistance to agricultural settlement. While "Seward's Folly" has proven to be the most enduring of these epithets, terms like "Seward's Ice Box," "Iceburgia," and "The Iceberg Purchase" did more to supply Americans with a mental picture of the territory and were visually reinforced by farcical political cartoons. On April 20, 1867, *Frank Leslie's Weekly Newspaper* published an editorial cartoon titled "Preparing for the Heated Term" (Figure 1), which depicts Secretary of State William Henry Seward—the man responsible for orchestrating the purchase—and President Andrew Johnson carrying a large block of ice labeled "Russian America," in a wheelbarrow labeled "Treaty." In the background, a Russian diplomat makes off with a $7,000,000 bag of money, and a caption beneath the image reads, "King Andy and his man Billy lay in a great stock of Russian ice in order to cool down the Congressional majority." This cartoon insinuates that the Alaska purchase was merely a diversion intended to pacify an incensed American public, a desperate attempt to drum up support on behalf of the immensely unpopular Johnson administration. On the same day, *Harper's Weekly* published a similar cartoon by famed illustrator Thomas Nast titled "The Big Thing" (Figure 2). Nast's cartoon shows Seward wearing a dress and applying "Russian Salve" to the head of an angry Uncle Sam, who is shaking his fist at a picture of a crowned Andrew Johnson. On the wall

PREPARING FOR THE HEATED TERM.

King Andy and his man Billy lay in a great stock of Russian ice in order to cool down the Congressional majority.

Figure 1. Preparing for the Heated Term
Frank Leslie's Weekly Newspaper

"THE BIG THING."

OLD MOTHER SEWARD. "I'll rub some of this on his sore spot: it may soothe him a little."

Figure 2. "The Big Thing"
Harper's Weekly

behind them hangs a picture of Alaska labeled "Map of the Russian Fairy Land / Only $7,000,000 in Gold." This map consists entirely of Arctic stereotypes: Alaska is a mountainous iceberg with the U.S. flag flying from its spires; a man holding another U.S. flag is chased by a polar bear. Beneath the cartoon, a caption reads, "Old Mother Seward. 'I'll rub some of this on his sore spot. It may soothe him a little." Once again, this image presents the Alaska purchase as nothing more than a strategic attempt to placate an outraged nation.

Other cartoons presented the Alaska purchase as less an act of political strategy than sheer gullibility. On May 25, 1867, *Frank Leslie's Weekly Newspaper* published "The Two Peter Funks" (Figure 3), a cartoon which portrays Seward as a child being swindled by a "Russian Stranger." Alaska again appears as a series of gigantic icebergs, this time with a man—presumably an Eskimo—seated atop one of the peaks, just beyond the reach of the ferocious polar bears which surround him. In a caption beneath the image, the Russian asks Seward to trade his toy boats for "a fine lot of bears, seals, icebergs and Esquimaux—They're no use to me," explains the Russian. "I'll swop 'em all for those boats you've got." The caption then notes that "Billy, like other foolish boys, jumps at the idea." By figuring the purchase as a bad trade, this cartoon invites the viewer to contemplate the other uses which 7.2 million dollars of taxpayer money might be put to, were it not in the hands of a foolish and fiscally irresponsible administration. As the cartoon's title suggests, there are two Peter Funks—swindlers—in this scenario, and one of them is Seward himself.

By portraying Alaska as a group of frozen islands, if not actual blocks of ice, these cartoons present the territory as unsuitable for agricultural settlement and thus incapable of

THE TWO PETER FUNKS.

RUSSIAN STRANGER—"*I say, little boy, do you want to trade? I've got a fine lot of bears, seals, icebergs and Esquimaux—They're no use to me, I'll swop 'em all for those boats you've got.*"

[Billy, like other foolish boys, jumps at the idea.]

Figure 3. The Two Peter Funks
Frank Leslie's Weekly Newspaper

Figure 4. Our New Senators
Frank Leslie's Weekly Newspaper

fostering "American" ways of life. Other cartoons took the inverse approach, staging scenes intended to show the absurdity of attempting to incorporate Alaska's indigenous population into the body politic. On April 27, 1867, *Frank Leslie's Weekly Newspaper* published a cartoon which features Seward and Johnson greeting "Our New Senators" from Alaska (Figure 4). One is a racist caricature of an Alaska Native, named "Mr. Kamskatca," and the other is a penguin,

Figure 5. What We May Look for Soon
Harper's Weekly

inexplicably named "Mr. Seal": "My dear Mr. Kamskatca," exclaims Seward, "you really must dine with me. I have some of the very finest tallow candles and the loveliest train oil you ever tasted, and my whale blubber is exquisite." A similar cartoon, titled "What We May Look for Soon" (Figure 5), appeared in *Harper's Weekly* on May 4, showing "The Hon. Tookooloto Jabinkoker, Delegate from the Kodiak District of" Alaska, at Delmonico's restaurant in New York City. The caption beneath the image contains a similar racist joke: "train oil," "tallow candles for one," etc.

The belief that indigenous Alaskans could never be assimilated into U.S. national culture relied on pseudoscientific assumptions about the nature of the Alaskan environment and its influence on the development of its residents. In 1890, *The Atlantic Monthly* published an article titled "A New Race Problem," which argues that because Alaska "will never be adapted to cattle raising…it will be impossible to introduce the native to that intermediary stage of a pastoral life,

which has found much encouragement among those who have regarded it as one of the most important steps in civilizing the Indians of the 'plains.'" Moreover, this writer goes on to state that the "intensely humid climate…and the mountainous topography" of Alaska "will forever deny those people the blessings of agriculture," which many associated with civilization and republican virtues. And because the "science of engineering has not yet, and doubtless never will, overcome the obstacles to railroad building" in Alaska, there seemed little chance that the territory would experience the kinds of industrial development that transformed the West in previous decades (Keatley 210).

These objections to the acquisition of Alaska operate on the assumption that Alaska was purchased as a space for settlement and would one day be incorporated into the nation as a state. However, according to historian Walter Nugent, "[s]ettling Alaska with American farmers, as a reason for acquiring it, was low to the point of invisibility for Seward or anyone else" involved in the orchestration of the purchase (239). Instead, the acquisition of Alaska was part of Seward's broader project of constructing a vast commercial empire across the Pacific. As such, Nugent identifies the Alaska purchase as the first chapter in a new program of U.S. expansion which shifted emphasis "from settlement to commerce, from peopling an area to controlling its politics and economy" (244). Nevertheless, prominent advocates of the purchase—including Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner—encouraged Americans to imagine Alaska as a land waiting to be populated by industrious Americans. On April 8, 1867, Sumner delivered a three-hour speech on the Senate floor, outlining the advantages of the Alaska purchase and the various resources the United States stood to gain by it. In addition to the commercial prospects of Alaskan timber, mineral deposits, furs, and fisheries, Sumner suggested that

> there is reason to believe that [Barley] may be cultivated successfully very far to the north. It has ripened at Kodiak. There are many garden vegetables which have become domesticated…[A]t Sitka potatoes flourish; so that all have enough...There are also radishes, cabbages, cauliflowers, peas, and carrots—making a very respectable list. The same, perhaps, may be found at Ounalaska. On Norton sound I hear of radishes, beets, and cabbages. Even as far north as Fort Youkon [*sic*]…potatoes, peas, turnips, and even barley have been grown. (33)

Sumner also asserted that "[t]he grass at Kodiak is well suited to cattle, and it is supposed that sheep would thrive there" (34). Descriptions of Alaska as a site of potential settlement engendered a set of expectations which would prove disappointing as Americans found themselves largely unable to develop the territory in the following decades. By 1877, enthusiasm surrounding Alaska had waned to the point that even a positive assessment of the purchase acknowledged that the territory had been grossly misrepresented by the promotional rhetoric of its supporters. An article in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* proclaimed that although "eloquent advocates" of the purchase "sketched the country as the 'New England of the Pacific,' peopled it with farmers, and covered its bleak hills with flocks," in reality "not an acre of [Alaska] has been or can be successfully cultivated" ("Ten Years' Acquaintance with Alaska" 812, 805). The writer singles out Sumner in particular, noting that while Sumner was well intentioned, "he was deceived by the cunning advocates of the purchase," and his speech in favor of the treaty amounted to "a rich burlesque upon the country" (812). "Alaska will never be…the land for us," the writer concludes, because nearly five-sixths of the territory "will never be—can never be—the home of civilized humanity" (815, 813).

Of course, Alaska was not the first American landscape that disrupted the Jeffersonian vision of yeoman farmers settling an agricultural utopia. Nor did the idea of an U.S. commercial empire originate with Seward. As Stephanie LeMenager has demonstrated, throughout the nineteenth century "environments that resist[ed] the agrarian symbolism of the sacred plow" generated "counter-narratives of Manifest Destiny." Spaces which Americans believed "could only be subjected to commercial dominance" revealed "the nature of the nation" to be "groundless, like the market itself and the apparently landless or uncultivatable environments that supported it" (15). If Alaska resembled any part of the West in the nineteenth century, it was the mythical "Great American Desert"—the western portion of the Great Plains as it was imagined in the antebellum era.[9] During this period, many believed the desert would remain perpetually resistant to settlement, "breaking the nation into two coastal republics" separated by a middle space that could never be incorporated into the nation (28). However, after the First Transcontinental Railroad bound East and West together in 1869, the desert West would find a place in the national imaginary as a tourist destination.

Marguerite S. Shaffer has explored how domestic tourism helped provide Americans with a sense of national identity in the late nineteenth century. As the United States developed "the infrastructure of the modern nation-state" in the years following the Civil War, "tourism emerged as a form of geographical consumption" which imbued the various regions of the United States with national meaning (3). "In teaching tourists what to see and how to see it, promoters invented and mapped an idealized American history and tradition across the American landscape, defining an organic nationalism that linked national identity to a shared territory and history" (4). Although initially postbellum tourism was largely restricted to those with considerable wealth,

[9] In addition to the icebox image, opponents of the purchase described Alaska as "a vast uninhabitable desert" and "a frozen desert of a colony," evoking longstanding anxieties of the Great American Desert ("The Russian Treaty"; "The Week").

middle-class Americans enjoyed vicarious tourist experiences through travel writing. One of the most popular U.S. publications to emerge after the Civil War was *Picturesque America; or, The Land We Live In* (1872–4), a two-volume set of books which claimed to "present full descriptions and elaborate pictorial delineations of the scenery characteristic of all the different parts of our country" (iii). In his preface to the first volume, William Cullen Bryant describes *Picturesque America* as a product of "the overland communications lately opened between the Atlantic coast and that of the Pacific," enabling "easy access to scenery of a most remarkable character. For those who would see Nature in her grandest forms," explains Bryant, "there is no longer any occasion to cross the ocean. A rapid journey by railway over the plains that stretch westward from the Mississippi, brings the tourist into the region of the Rocky Mountains" (iii). In addition to the mountains and canyons of the West, Bryant encourages his readers not to overlook "the scenery of the desert" found "in those tracts of our Western possessions where rains never fall nor springs gush to moisten the soil" (iv). Thus, while the desert West remained hostile to the forms of settler colonialism that took hold in other parts of the nation, *Picturesque America* and similar publications allowed Americans to imagine the desert as part of "the land we live in."

Yet despite its claim to represent "all the different parts of our country," *Picturesque America* is by no means a comprehensive overview of the national domain. For this reason, Sue Rainey suggests that "the book serves as an important indicator of what the contributors and their public wanted to see—and what they preferred to avoid" (xiv). Unsurprisingly, Alaska makes no appearance in this celebratory overview of the nation's grandeur. Alaska's tenuous relationship with the rest of the nation was hardly a source of national pride, and the territory remained virtually inaccessible to the U.S. public through the 1870s. However, this would change in the

early 1880s, when the first steamboat tours of Alaska enabled wealthy Americans to visit the territory. Robert Campbell has examined how Alaskan tourism and the "flood of travel writing" it produced "helped to fix a particular vision of the north in the national imaginations of Americans" (12). As Campbell demonstrates, Alaskan tourism "served as a necessary 'prequel' to the story of the Klondike gold rush," transforming "Alaska into a place of colonial conquest and the natural resource extraction it entailed" (9). But even as Alaska became a common subject of travel writing, it remained virtually absent from the related genre of local color fiction. As Richard Brodhead has shown, local color fiction participated in the same tourist economies as "the prose of vacation travel," appearing in the same periodicals "in virtually fixed conjunction." Rather than conceiving of tourist-oriented travel narratives and regional fiction as autonomous genres, Brodhead contends that they are better understood as "mutually supportive parts of a concerted textual plan" (131). Why, then, was Alaska so popular in one form but not the other? Why were U.S. writers largely unable to produce regional fictions of Alaska in the nineteenth century?

Although local color fiction was fueled by the tourist industry, it purportedly showcases "authentic" local communities that were ostensibly disappearing under the standardizing effects of national incorporation. As Stephanie Foote explains, "[r]egional fiction's appeal was its presentation of people and places that seemed to have 'escaped' the dubious improvements of a stronger and more integrated urban economy" (3). But these people and places had to be recognizable as national subjects in order to make sense within the genre's project of "imagin[ing] a homogeneous past for a heterogeneous nation." The "regional folk" of local color fiction, observes Foote, "are distinctly American—they inhabit, after all, American territories and thus are droll likenesses of regular Americans. They might even be images of the ancestors

of middle-class urban dwellers, emblems of an earlier, generative community" (6). Such a community of prototypical "Americans" was difficult to imagine in Alaska, where the indigenous population vastly outnumbered the white.[10] Though U.S. readers were fascinated by descriptions and drawings of Alaska Natives, these accounts and images reaffirmed perceptions of the territory as an uncivilized region, incompatible with the rest of the nation. While travel writing fixated on the aspects of Alaska most foreign to U.S. readers, writers needed to be able to imagine Alaska as the home of U.S. citizens in order to construct regional fictions of the territory. Although, in reality, local color fiction was often written by tourists, Hamlin Garland—a notable practitioner and champion of the genre—defined local color writing as that which "has such quality of texture and background that it could not have been written in any other place or by any one else than a native." It is, he contends, "as indigenous as the plant-growth" (*Crumbling Idols* 64). Garland's statement exhibits the settler colonial function of the genre, which harnesses the "authenticity" of its fictional communities in order to "indigenize" the settler nation by recasting white Americans as "natives."[11] As Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson explain,

> One of the principal functions of the indigenizing narrative is to legitimize the settler; to put the settler in the cultural and discursive place of the indigene whose physical space has already been invaded. The indigenized settler is the figure who is ready to step in when the native 'dies out.' The native must *make way* for the settler because there was a legal and moral prohibition against 'invasion.' (364)

As a type of this "indigenizing narrative," local color works to displace the native histories that undermine the legitimacy of the settler nation. But the settler invasion which precipitates this

[10] An 1880 census found that only 430 of the 33,426 people residing in Alaska were white (Nugent 250).

[11] The term "indigenization" is Terry Goldie's. See *Fear and Temptation*, 13.

discursive invasion had hardly begun in Alaska, and many remained skeptical that it would ever come to fruition. Walter Hixson notes that unlike the "explosive settlement" of the West during the mid-nineteenth century, settler colonialism "evolved slowly in Alaska before accelerating in the 1890s" with the Klondike gold rush (114, 163). Thus, at the height of its popularity, regional fiction could not speak to Alaska without attempting to narrate a process of transformation that did not seem to be occurring in actuality. The few pieces of Alaskan local color fiction to appear before the Klondike gold rush, like Mary Tidball's "Paul and Nicolai in Alaska," demonstrate this.

"Paul and Nicolai in Alaska"

Mary Langdon Tidball lived in Alaska from April 1870 until September 1871. The wife of John C. Tidball, Commander of the Department of Alaska, Mary Tidball was one of few U.S. women with access to the territory before the rise of the Alaskan tourist industry. Her experience as a resident of Sitka afforded her a unique perspective, allowing her to write perhaps the most quintessential piece of Alaskan local color fiction to appear before the Klondike gold rush. Her story "Paul and Nicolai in Alaska" was published in an 1887 issue of *St. Nicholas* magazine—the children's branch of *The Century* magazine—at a time when Alaskan tourism had generated a great public interest in the territory. Tidball's story follows a standard tourist itinerary, featuring all the attractions which her readers would expect: the wharf, the Russian palace, the Greek Orthodox church, the Indian village and market, etc. It also contains the ethnological digressions typical of travel writing. The narrator notes, for example, that

> The Aleuts are a race small of stature, gentle, and almost timid. Their origin is uncertain, but some wise men believe that they came from Asia, across the Pacific

> or by Behring's Strait. The Aleuts believe themselves to be Russians, and they speak a Russian dialect, but their appearance is not unlike that of the Chinese. Nothing insults them more than to be thought related to the Indians. (370)

But even while the story capitalizes on the exotic elements of Alaska in much the same way as travel writing, "Paul and Nicolai in Alaska" also presents Sitka in a state of transition, emphasizing the stability which the U.S. military presence brings to the territory and inviting the reader to identify with a newly-arrived community of U.S. citizens.

The story begins immediately following the Russian departure from Sitka after the transfer of Alaska to the United States. A young boy, Nicolai Nicoloff, tearfully watches "the Russian ships as they disappeared on the horizon," taking the majority of Sitka's Russian population, including Nicolai's mother and sister, back to Russia (367). Walking back through town, Nicolai meets Paul, the fur-capped, blonde-haired son of the new American commandant. "[A] handsome lad," Paul embodies the virtues of the benevolent Americans now in possession of the territory: "he looked so brave and friendly as he smiled a welcome at Nicolai, that our poor little Ruski already felt almost comforted" (368). The two boys set off to go sledding but soon encounter a group of Indians blocking the sidewalk. As they try to pass, Paul's sled brushes the foot of an Indian girl, Alounka, who steals the sled in an act of retribution. Paul and Nicolai give chase, following her as she absconds into the Indian village that exists outside of the white settlement. Eventually, the two boys find themselves pursued by Alounka's father, Hintza. Unlike the other Indians of the story, Hintza is malicious and constitutes a genuine threat to those around him:

> This man, Hintza, was a son of Annahoots, chief of the Sitkas. Peaceful old Annahoots wished always to be on good terms with his neighbors; but Hintza,

> since early youth, had been the means of getting his father into difficulties with the Russians and with the neighboring and remote Indian tribes. Hintza found an enemy in every man he encountered; and he was himself a very terror to his own tribe, since they were frequently at war with other tribes on his account. (370)

Hintza's presence in the story justifies the U.S. military occupation of Alaska as a necessary means of securing civilization for both the white and indigenous populations who, on the whole, desire the peace and stability which the U.S. can provide. Although Hintza captures Paul and Nicolai, they are released when the Sitka Indians are attacked by the Chilkat tribe as part of an ongoing feud that began when Hintza "killed a Chilkat brave in a hasty quarrel." For three days Sitka's white population remains barricaded in the garrison, until finally a U.S. man-of-war arrives, putting "a sudden end to hostilities." As the ship fires a salute, the "Chilkats and Sitkas were alike convinced that the terrible noise threatened punishment to both, and they made immediate preparations for a *cultus potlatch*," the peacemaking ceremony that would restore good relations between the tribes. At this point, "Hintza, wisely remembering his recent offense, disappeared altogether."

With the threat of Hintza purged from the story, a new relationship is established between the boys and the Indians. They are given seats of honor at the potlatch, which they observe as an exotic spectacle of "dances with frightful howls" and the shaking of "gaudy wooden rattles—a weird, almost terrible scene." In this moment, Paul and Nicolai become tourists in their own right, consuming this tribal ritual as a source of entertainment. This moment also marks a transformation in their relationship with Alounka. As the boys "cast their glances about in search of Alounka," they "feel a sense of disappointment that she was nowhere in sight." However, she

later reveals herself to Paul and "with a gesture that was partly shy and friendly, and partly defiant," offers him a basket

> such as only Alaskan Indians can make…cunningly woven, delicately shaped, and of brilliant colors. The straw, dyed stitch by stitch, and of all colors, was woven in, also stitch by stitch, over the under-plaited rootlets in a manner resembling the work on old tapestry. It contained a number of walrus-ivory and black-horn carvings—carvings for which the Alaskan Indians are now famous, and in which none were more deft and cunning than the elfish maid Alounka.

Alounka's peace offering is essentially a basket of the prized Alaskan souvenirs which tourists eagerly sought from locals. Robert Campbell notes that the symbolic value of these souvenirs was derived from a "fascination with native labor" and "the hands of the craft worker whose efforts were etched or woven into" the artifact. "The souvenir" thus "helped to summon a lost world of 'a fast dying race' and intimacies with nature," which the natives were imagined to enjoy (171). Alounka's gift occasions a moment of slippage between Paul's desire for the fetishized native artifacts and a desire for Alounka herself, whom he now sees as "wholly bewitching." The story ends as Paul "impulsively thrust[s] out his free hand to detain" Alounka, who "slip[s] away, and [is] lost in the pressing throng" (372).

Alounka's disappearance at the end of the story aligns her with the settler colonial myth of the "vanishing American," yet it is also a trope of regional fiction, which often culminates with a moment of disappearance that represents the extinction of a past way of life—the disappearance of Dunnet Landing at the end of Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs* being a notable example. However, Paul's unfulfilled desire for Alounka can only embody this local color nostalgia insofar as the reader can imagine Alounka's world being supplanted by

something new. Tidball is able to accomplish this by setting her story at what appears to be a moment of transition, as Alaska is seemingly being brought into the dominion of the United States. But this requires a significant suspension of disbelief that would be difficult to sustain in adult readers, as the process of Americanization which the story anticipates had not occurred in actuality. The U.S. military occupation of Alaska had ended in 1877 without any discernable transformation occurring within Alaska's cultural or racial demographic. Alounka had not disappeared; Paul had. Tidball's story therefore constitutes a good example of the exception proving the rule: to set a conventional local color story in Alaska required Tidball to ignore the United States' inability to incorporate the territory into the nation in any meaningful way.

Bret Harte's "Arctic Vision"

The rise of local color fiction in the late-nineteenth-century United States is often traced back to Bret Harte, whose 1868 story "The Luck of Roaring Camp" is widely credited with sparking unprecedented interest in the genre. However, the year before his rise to national prominence, Harte published a poem in the San Francisco newspaper *The Bulletin*, celebrating the purchase of Alaska as a momentous occasion in U.S. history. Titled "An Arctic Vision," Harte's poem appeared on April 8, 1867, the day before the Senate would vote to confirm or deny the treaty for the cessation of Alaska. As I. N. Higginson observes, Harte's poem was "a creation of the moment; it repeated many of the contemporary beliefs and myths concerning Alaska that had appeared in the newspapers" (343). Despite the poem's unmitigated support for the purchase, it adopts many of the images used by its opponents.[12] Harte's Alaska is home to

[12] Historian Richard E. Welch Jr. notes that supporters of the purchase would occasionally employ the same negative stereotypes as it opponents: "The walrus and the polar bear lent themselves to jest and remarks of supposed wit, and even many pro-Alaska editors could not resist a facetious comment or two" (483).

"short-legged Esquimaux" (1), "playful polar bear[s]" (3), walruses, and icebergs which now "belong to Uncle Sam" (39). Rather than downplaying the extremity of the climate—as other boosters of Alaska would—Harte readily acknowledges Alaska's place in "the frigid zone" (7) in order to present Alaska as a stage on which white Americans will exhibit their racial supremacy. Harte's poem imagines the newly arrived American in Alaska as

> a form whose features strike
> Russ and Esquimaux alike.
> He it is whom Skalds of old
> In their Runic rhymes foretold;
> Lean and lank of jaw,
> See the real Northern Thor!
> See the awful Yankee leering
> Just across the Straits of Behring[.] (42–9)

This picture of the Yankee as "the real Northern Thor" anticipates the pseudoscientific racial theories—discussed in the next chapter—that would attribute the alleged superiority of the white race to the climatic conditions of its supposedly northern origin. The third stanza of "An Arctic Vision" gives voice to the American "hero of this drama," employing dialect typical of Harte's western local color fiction to outline the various resources which Alaska offers the industrious pioneer:

> Wa'll, I reckon 't ain't so bad,
> Seein' ez 't was all they had;
> True, the Springs are rather late
> And early Falls predominate;

But the ice crop ’s pretty sure,

And the air is kind o’ pure;

’T ain’t so very mean a trade,

When the land is all surveyed.

There ’s a right smart chance for fur-chase

All along this recent purchase,

And, unless the stories fail,

Every fish from cod to whale;

Rocks, too; mebbe quartz; let ’s see,—

’T would be strange if there should be,—

Seems I ’ve heerd such stories told;

Eh!—why, bless us;—yes, it’s gold! (60–75)

The poem’s final stanza finds the American Thor hard at work with “his California pick,” explicitly linking the California gold rush with the future of Alaska. While the picture of Alaska that emerges in “An Arctic Vision” does not resemble the California setting of Harte’s popular regional fiction, Harte is nonetheless enthusiastic about its colonial and symbolic potential.

Mark Twain and Alaska

Mark Twain, however, did not share Harte’s vision of Alaska. Twain’s earliest reference to the territory occurs in a sketch titled “Information Wanted,” which ridicules Seward’s expansionist agenda, specifically his efforts to purchase the Danish West Indies.[13] First published in the *New-York Tribune* on December 18, 1867, “Information Wanted” recounts the absurd

[13] Although Seward had successfully negotiated a treaty with Denmark for the purchase of the Danish West Indies in 1867, it would later be rejected by the Senate. See Immerman, *Empire for Liberty*, 126–7.

misadventures of Twain's fictional uncle on the island of St. Thomas, where he has gone in hopes of securing "a living in an honest, humble way." His desire to "settle down, and be quiet and unostentatious" is repeatedly thwarted by all manner of disasters—robbery, fever, storm, earthquake, volcano, and tidal wave—leaving him discouraged and unsure what to do. The last paragraph of the sketch notes that

> He has tried Alaska; but the bears kept after him so much, and kept him so much on the jump, as it were, that he had to leave the country. He could not be quiet there with those bears prancing after him all the time. That is how he came to go to the new island we have bought—St. Thomas. But he is getting to think St. Thomas is not quiet enough for a man of his turn of mind, and that is why he wishes me to find out if Government is likely to buy some more islands shortly.

In this passage, Twain invokes one of the common images deployed in opposition to the Alaska purchase—that of Alaska as a land of polar bears—as a precursor to his portrayal of St. Thomas as a chaotic space, resistant to U.S. development. In doing so, he positions the Alaska purchase as part of an ongoing series of foolish territorial acquisitions that fail to benefit the nation. The sketch concludes with the narrator's uncle eagerly awaiting the U.S. purchase of Puerto Rico, another rumored interest of Seward.

Though "Information Wanted" only mentions Alaska in passing, Twain would revisit the subject more substantially in his 1893 story "The Esquimau Maiden's Romance." Although not explicitly set in Alaska, Twain gives his "Esquimau" maiden the name "Lasca," an obvious pun which allows his narrator persona to exclaim, "Ah, Lasca, you *are* a fortunate girl!" as he facetiously marvels at her family's wealth of "elegant snow, and sumptuous icebergs and

limitless sterility" (58).[14] The tone of the story recalls the newspaper editorials that lampooned the purchase in 1867, and the accompanying illustrations of Eskimos situated among icebergs, igloos, and Arctic wildlife evoke the political cartoons which portrayed Alaska as an Arctic wasteland. Because of its farcical nature, "The Esquimau Maiden's Romance" seemingly resists being taken too seriously. Moreover, the story's frequent use of racist stereotypes more than accounts for the fact that it has not garnered significant critical attention beyond that of completist Twain scholars, who have generally deemed it a poorly written, financially-motivated parody of the sentimental love story.

Though this assessment is not wrong, I would also argue that Twain's gestures to Alaska, recognized as such, allow us to read the story as a parody of local color fiction. As James D. Wilson observes, "'The Esquimau Maiden's Romance' is essentially two interwoven stories. The first is the 'romance' itself, Lasca's account of her ill-fated love," but the "dominant story" is "the frame that encloses it: the interaction and dialogue between Mark Twain—the representative of the dominant culture—and the maiden" (72). Thus, Twain's fictional persona plays the role of the local-color narrator who "mediat[es] between the enclosed world of the region and the larger world beyond" (D. Campbell 12). The first page contains a large illustration of a fur-clad Twain—pen and paper in hand—transcribing Lasca's words (Figure 6). The story opens with Lasca stating, "Yes, I will tell you anything about my life that you would like to know, Mr. Twain," as if to suggest that the story about to unfold is one that Twain has recorded rather than fabricated.

However, throughout the narrative, Twain repeatedly undercuts this staged "authenticity" with numerous jokes and Arctic stereotypes, most of which hinge on cross-cultural discrepancies

[14] Twain made a similar pun in his sketch "The Last Words of Great Men," which first appeared in the *Buffalo Express* on September 11, 1869. Twain suggests that Seward's last words should be simply, "Alas!-ka" (140).

of value that arise from the isolation of the story's Arctic setting. For example, while Lasca brags about the size of her father's igloo, she is unable to appreciate the value of the animal furs which they contain. "I could have told her that those masses of rich furs constituted wealth—or would

Figure 6. The Esquimau Maiden's Romance
Cosmopolitan

in my country," explains the narrator, "but she would not have understood that; those were not the kind of things that ranked as riches with her people. I could have told her that the clothes she had on…were worth twelve or fifteen hundred dollars…but she would not have understood it." Likewise, Lasca is unable to comprehend the value of ice in the United States. When the narrator mentions that ice is a purchasable commodity in his land, Lasca exclaims, "Oh, I *never* heard of anything so silly! My, there's plenty of it—it isn't worth anything. Why, there is a hundred miles of it in sight right now. I wouldn't give a fish-bladder for the whole of it" (55). Conversely, the objects which signify wealth in the Arctic are revealed to be virtually worthless in the United States. Lasca's father, the richest man in the Arctic, measures his wealth in iron fish hooks, of which he owns twenty-two. Lasca's most prized possession—a family "jewel"—proves to be "nothing but a battered old N.Y. Central baggage-check" (58). The appearance of this emblem of railroad travel as a rare jewel underscores the fact that the story's setting exists beyond the reach of commercial development and the transportation infrastructure that could bring its resources to market. Twain's focus on the unstable relations of value across space echoes early debates regarding Alaska's value and whether or not its resources could ever be profitably extracted.

Nevertheless, in true local color form, the culture of the outside world has begun to encroach upon the long-isolated Arctic community. This process begins with Lasca's father's decision to give up the traditionally migratory lifestyle of his people and establish a permanent residence. Lasca notes that her "tribe had always been used to wandering about from place to place over the frozen seas, like the other tribes, but my father got tired of that…and built this great mansion of frozen snow-blocks…and here we have stayed ever since" (54). Lasca laments that this decision precipitates a cultural transformation that has

> lowered the tone of all our tribe. Once they were a frank and manly race, now they are measly hypocrites, and sodden with servility…Our tribe was once plain simple folk, and content with the bone fish-hooks of their fathers; now they are eaten up with avarice and would sacrifice every sentiment of honor and honesty to possess themselves of the debasing fish-hooks of the foreigner. (59)

These fish hooks become a source of tragedy for Lasca when her fiancé Kalula is falsely accused of stealing one. Despite his claims of innocence, Kalula is ultimately left to starve on an iceberg set adrift in the ocean. When the missing fish hook is found nine months later, exonerating Kalula, the story's warning about the destructive effects of wealth accumulation becomes obvious. Yet Twain provides a deliberate misreading of this moral, as his narrator concludes that "since a hundred million dollars in New York and twenty-two fish-hooks on the border of the Arctic Circle represent the same financial supremacy, a man in straightened circumstances is a fool to stay in New York when he can buy ten cents' worth of fish-hooks and emigrate" (63). Instead of feeling sympathy for Lasca or recognizing his complicity—as a representative of the United States—in the destructive cultural transformations occurring in her community, Twain's narrator can only think of how the United States can exploit it further. Although Twain's narrator imagines himself as Lasca's friend, Twain the author highlights the self-interested and hollow nature of that friendship. For this reason, Horst H. Kruse identifies "The Esquimau Maiden's Romance" as "an important signpost…on the road from *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* to the overtly anti-imperialist writings of Mark Twain's later years," suggesting that it "may even mark the very point at which he was making the transition from an imperialist to an anti-imperialist position that had to wait until the turn of the century to become the dominant stance of his satires" (81).

By the l890s, the imperial aspirations of the U.S. had become increasingly apparent, bolstered by a sense that the nation had exhausted its domestic frontier. In the same year that Twain published "The Esquimau Maiden's Romance," Frederick Jackson Turner delivered his influential speech on "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," famously arguing that

> American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character. The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, it is the Great West. (200)

According to this logic, the closing of the western frontier—as reported by the 1890 census report—left the United States in an uncertain moment of transition. "[T]he frontier has gone," concludes Turner, "and with its going has closed the first period of American history" (227). If the frontier had shaped national character in the ways that Turner suggested, what would become of the nation without it? Could Alaska provide the same frontier experience as the West?

Hamlin Garland and *The Trail of the Goldseekers*

Turner's interpretation of the western frontier as the origin of a supposedly unique national character was undoubtedly appealing to regional writers like Hamlin Garland, whose fiction privileged the West as "the real America" (*Crumbling Idols* 176). Garland's first literary success came with his 1891 *Main-Travelled Roads*, a collection of local color stories detailing the lives and hardships of farmers in the rural Midwest. Stephanie Foote notes that unlike most

local color writers, who tailored their regional descriptions to fit tourist expectations, Garland "refus[ed] to aestheticize the Midwest…deliberately eschew[ing] any rhetoric that might have been remotely connected to tourism" (42). In 1894, Garland published *Crumbling Idols*, a collection of essays championing local color as the ideal form of national literature. "It is a settled conviction with me," writes Garland, "that each locality must produce its own literary record, each special phase of life utter its own voice" (22). This body of literature "will not be spectacular, it will not deal with the outside (as a tourist must do). It will deal with the people and their home dramas" (27). By attending to one's own region, the local writer ensures "that every tree and bird and mountain shall be dear and companionable and necessary, not picturesque; the tourist," asserts Garland, "cannot write the local novel" (64).

Nevertheless, despite his contempt for the picturesque literature of the tourist, Garland would attempt precisely this sort of writing only a few years later. In 1899 he published *The Trail of the Goldseekers: A Record of Travel in Prose and Verse*, chronicling his journey through Canada and Alaska during the gold rush. Less interested in mining gold than acquiring aesthetic experience and literary fodder, Garland set out with the belief

> that I was about to see and take part in a most picturesque and impressive movement across the wilderness. I believed it to be the last great march of the kind which could ever come in America, so rapidly were the wild places being settled up. I wished, therefore, to take part in this tramp of the goldseekers, to be one of them, and record their deeds. I wished to return to the wilderness also, to forget books and theories of art and social problems, and come again face to face with the great free spaces of woods and skies and streams. I was not a goldseeker,

> but a nature hunter, and I was eager to enter this, the wildest region yet remaining in Northern America. (8)

Garland was not alone in his desire to experience and record this "movement across the wilderness." As Shari M. Huhndorf notes, narratives of the gold rush became extremely popular at the turn of the century, "redefin[ing]" Alaska "in the U.S. imagination as a site for tourism, settlement, resource development, and, eventually, formal political inclusion through statehood." As "popular stories about the 'last frontier' rewrote the region's history as an extension of previous U.S. acquisitions," Alaska was transformed "into a quintessentially American place" (*Mapping the Americas* 38). However, this transformation did not occur instantly. Although the gold rush temporarily made "whites the majority" population of Alaska and "expand[ed] their settlements over a broader area of the state" than ever before (37), perceptions of the territory as an Arctic wasteland still held significant traction.

The Trail of the Goldseekers shows Garland vacillating between these two contradictory perceptions, struggling to reconcile his experience of the North with his idealized expectations, which are clearly shaped by a nostalgia for past American gold rushes. This nostalgia undoubtedly influenced Garland's decision to take the "prairie route" through Canada on horseback rather than traveling by sea up the coast of Alaska, the more common and less arduous route. In the first chapter, Garland brags that he had "willingly and with joy" chosen "the long way round, the hard way through" (8). The next page contains a short poem in which Garland constructs an image of himself as "The Cow-Boy":

> Of rough rude stock this saddle sprite
> Is grosser grown with savage things.
> Inured to storms, his fierce delight

Is lawless as the beast he swings

His swift rope over.—Libidinous, obscene,

Careless of dust and dirt, serene,

He faces snow in calm disdain,

Or makes his bed down in the rain. (9)

Poems of this nature are interspersed throughout the text, becoming increasingly ridiculous as Garland's narration of his journey consistently debunks his masculine posturing. For this reason, Robert Gishargues that Garland's self-dramatization constitutes "a zany and unconscious parody of the ideal, heroic trailer and man of the wilderness which Garland…could only imitate in a most theatrical and stylized way" (412). In other words, Garland's performance is that of a tourist trying to realize a fantasy, and his enthusiastic descriptions of the picturesque—when he finds it—read like those of countless other tourists that traveled west in the nineteenth century. These passages primarily occur early Garland's text, as he is making his way through British Columbia. For example, Garland describes the Tchesinkut Lake region as

> the land of our dreams! Here was the trailers' heaven! Wooded promontories, around which the wavelets sparkled, pushed out into the deep, clear flood. Great mountains rose in the background, lonely, untouched by man's all-desolating hand, while all about us lay suave slopes clothed with the most beautiful peavine, just beginning to ripple in the wind, and beyond lay level meadows lit by little ponds filled with wildfowl. There was just forest enough to lend mystery to these meadows, and to shut from our eager gaze the beauties of other and still more entrancing glades…It was God's own country after the gloomy monotony of the

> barren pine forest, and needed only a passing deer or a band of elk to be a poem as well as a picture." (59).

Clearly, this is the kind of environment which Garland is in search of, one that corresponds to his aesthetic expectations and can thus embody his nostalgia for a past American frontier. Garland notes that his experience of this landscape "was like going back to the prairies of Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa, as they were sixty years ago" (60).

Yet the farther north he goes the more consistently his attempts to revel in the grandeur of nature are interrupted. A few chapters later, Garland describes passing "through the most beautiful savannas, with fine spring brooks rushing from the mountain's side." However, Garland's experience of this landscape is marred by an element of nature that disrupts his romantic illusion. "We were almost completely happy," writes Garland, "but alas, the mosquitoes! Their hum silenced the songs of the birds; their feet made the mountains of no avail. The otherwise beautiful land became a restless hell for the unprotected man or beast." (85) As Garland proceeds closer "to the sub-arctic country" the land becomes increasingly "grim and desolate. The view was magnificent," he concedes, "but the land seemed empty and silent except of mosquitoes, of which there were uncounted millions" (119). Ultimately, Garland decides to abandon the trail altogether, taking a steamship down the Stikine river to the Alaskan coast. "The trail was a disappointment to me," he writes, "not because it was long and crossed mountains, but because it ran through a barren, monotonous, silent, gloomy, and rainy country. It ceased to interest me. It had almost no wild animal life, which I love to hear and see. Its lakes and rivers were for the most part cold and sullen, and its forests sombre and depressing" (180). But what Garland finds on the coast is far more troubling.

If the realities of the trail were disillusioning, the squalor and environmental degradation of the Alaskan coast was repulsive. As Garland makes his way from Skagway to Atlin Lake, the site of the most recent gold strike, he passes "more than two thousand dead horses" in a span of fifteen miles. "It was a cruel land, a land filled with the record of men's merciless greed." Though Garland maintains that "Nature herself" remained "cold, majestic, and grand," his descriptions of it become increasingly negative. "The birds sat on the bleak gray rocks in the gathering dusk with the suggestion of being utterly at the end of the world," writes Garland (208). "All was bare, wild, desolate, and drear" in "the gruesome little meadow covered with rotting carcasses and crates of bones which filled the air with odor of disease and death." Beyond the meadow, Garland passes "among endless rows of rotting carcasses, over poisonous streams and through desolate, fire-marked, and ghastly forests of small pines. Everywhere were the traces of the furious flood of humankind that had broken over this height in the early spring" (209). Amid these descriptions, Garland inserts a poem entitled "The Coast Range of Alaska," in which he states plainly,

> I hate this cold, bleak northern land,
> I fear its snow-flecked harborless strand—
> I fly to the south as a homing dove,
> Back to the land of corn I love.
> And never again shall I set my feet
> Where the snow and the sea and the mountains meet. (215)

Despite his desire to reconnect with an "authentic" American wilderness, what Garland finds in Alaska is nothing like the idyllic landscape he imagined. Nor had the gold rush produced the noble frontiersmen of Frederick Jackson Turner's mythology. When Garland finally arrives at

the goldfields, he finds that the men there "were filthy and profane for the most part, and made enjoyment of nature almost impossible. Many of them," he observes, "were of the rudest and most uninteresting types, nomads—almost tramps. They had nothing of the epic qualities which belong to the mountaineers and natural miners of the Rocky Mountains. Many of them were loafers and ne'er-do-wells from Skagway and other towns of the coast" (223). After a few days of casual mining, Garland is eager to return home, concluding that, like the trail through British Columbia, the goldseekers

> were a disappointment…They seemed like mechanisms. They moved as if drawn by some great magnet whose centre was Dawson City. They appeared to drift on and in toward that human maelstrom going irresolutely to their ruin. They did not seem to me strong men—on the contrary, they seemed weak men—or men strong with one insane purpose. (237–8)

Garland never considers the possibility that the goldminers of previous generations were equally "weak" or "insane." Rather, as Gish notes, Garland "sublimate[s] his hopes back to his romanticized view of the Forty-Niners and…the picturesque 'urban-pastoral' Rocky Mountains" (416). "It was plain to me," writes Garland, "that goldseeking in the Rocky Mountains was marvellously [*sic*] simple and easy compared to even the best sections of the Northwest." The "long journey of the Forty-niners was," in Garland's imagination, "incredibly more splendid and dramatic" and offered "the allurement of a land of eternal summer beyond the final great range. The long trail I had just passed was not only grim and monotonous, but led toward an ever increasing ferocity of cold and darkness to the arctic circle and the silence of death" (253). In Garland's final appraisal, the North is not the generative environment that the West had

supposedly been. Alaska was not so much the last frontier as the end of the world, where civilization deteriorates and men are destroyed by pathological greed.

CHAPTER II

ARCTIC EXPEDITIONS, NATIONAL ANXIETIES

As Paul Giles observes, "national histories…cannot be written simply from the inside. The scope and significance of their narrative involve not just the incorporation of multiple or discordant voices in a certain preestablished framework of unity, but also an acknowledgement of external points of reference that serve to relativize the whole conceptual field" (*Virtual Americas* 6). While many nineteenth-century Americans could not imagine Alaska as a legitimate part of the nation, neither could they deny its status as part of the national domain. The fact that Alaska could not be wholly excluded from the nation raised uncomfortable questions about the boundaries of the United States. Moreover, by undermining the foundational myth of the United States as a direct analogue of the continent, the U.S. possession of Alaska forced Americans to consider the nation as a contingent political construct—less a product of nature than of power. In this context, Alaska provided Americans with an imaginative space through which to contemplate a very different national future than that which seemed to be unfolding in the West. As a space long associated with sterility and death, the Arctic was symbolically weighted in ways that made it an especially effective medium for contemplating racial and national decline, concerns which became increasingly prominent in the U.S. as the century drew to a close. The midcentury disappearance of British explorer Sir John Franklin's Arctic expedition—and the subsequent revelation of the lost crew's resort to cannibalism—had reinforced European and American perceptions of the Arctic as a space defined by its capacity to

destroy white men. Yet this belief existed alongside persistent myths of the North as the origin of the white race and a region that "would activate [its] most sterling qualities" (Onion 135).

On April 6, 1867, Louis Agassiz wrote to Charles Sumner, urging him to support the purchase of Alaska on the grounds that it was suitable for "settlement by our race," a statement which he undoubtedly meant in the strictest sense (qtd. in Love 32). As the most famous proponent of the theory of polygeny—the idea that human races constituted separate species, each originating in and belonging to different geographical regions or "centers of creation"—Agassiz believed that the North was the natural home of the white race and therefore a region in which it would thrive (Gould 74–5). Although Agassiz's credibility in scientific circles was in decline by the time he wrote this letter—largely due to his resistance to Darwinian evolution—Agassiz remained an influential figure with the American public. Two days later, Sumner delivered a lengthy speech on the senate floor, portraying Alaska as a space waiting to be populated by industrious Americans. The published version of Sumner's speech even quotes the portion of Agassiz's letter anticipating the "settlement" of Alaska by "our race." Thus, the inability of the U.S. to settle the territory in the following decades seemed to carry unsettling racial implications. Although the Klondike gold rush would allow white Americans the opportunity to once again imagine the North as "a new frontier where Anglo Saxon males could reenact conquest and reclaim their manliness" (Kollin 63), in the thirty years following its purchase, Alaska fed anxieties of white racial decline and the emasculation of American men.

This chapter explores how and why Constance Fenimore Woolson and Sarah Orne Jewett—two popular regional writers of the late nineteenth century—embed Arctic subplots within their narratives of tropical Florida and New England. While neither text is explicitly concerned with Alaska, their representations of the Far North take on national significance when

read in light of the United States' prolonged frustrations in Alaska. First, I examine how Woolson's 1880 story of Reconstruction-era Florida, "The South Devil," juxtaposes a shattering field of Arctic ice with a tropical swamp to question the integrity of the continent and the national narratives predicated on it. Next, I analyze how Jewett's 1896 novel *The Country of the Pointed Firs* uses a narrative detour through the Arctic in order to frame her meditation on the perceived decline of rural New England and the so-called "race suicide" often associated with it. Together, these Arctic subnarratives suggest that Alaska's uncertain future came to embody broader national and racial anxieties in the late nineteenth century.

Reconstructing the Alaska Purchase

As discussed in the previous chapter, the earliest images of Alaska to appear before the U.S. public did so in the political propaganda of the Reconstruction era. Editorial cartoons portraying Alaska as an Arctic wasteland often implied that the Alaska purchase was merely an attempt to distract from the failures of Presidential Reconstruction. This allegation was popularized by Horace Greeley, the influential editor of the widely-read *New York Tribune* and perhaps the most outspoken opponent of the Alaska Purchase. Although an avid proponent of westward expansion—often credited with the iconic slogan "Go West, young man"—Greeley did not find in Alaska the promise of the West, nor did he suggest that any young man go there. Rather, Greeley denounced the purchase in no uncertain terms, accusing the Johnson administration of attempting "to cover up its failures at home" with "a stroke of foreign policy." "The collapse of the President's home policy is so total and so disastrous," explains Greeley, "that attention must be diverted elsewhither at any cost. Russian America is a good way off, and so a good place on which to fix the public eye" ("The Russian Slice"). While scholars often

dismiss his opposition to the Alaska purchase as politically motivated, this is only partially true. Though "Greeley was not likely to support any plan of Secretary of State William H. Seward's" given "their contentious political past," historian Mitchell Snay observes that Greeley's opposition to the Alaska purchase "followed the political principles he had developed during the antebellum decades" (166). His objections to the purchase were in keeping with those he and many others had raised in regard to the settlement of Oregon and California in the 1840s: the great distance and mountain ranges that separated Oregon from the rest of the nation "would be fatal," Greeley argued, to "the stability and beneficent working of Republican institutions" ("Oregon"). Extended to Oregon, the U.S. would cease to be a republic and "become what the Roman commonwealth was after the conquests of Caesar" ("Settlement of Oregon").[15] Greeley's opposition to the settlement of these territories stemmed from the commonly held belief that they were isolated from the rest of the nation by insurmountable natural barriers which rendered them effectively noncontiguous.[16] Because many believed that successful republican government could only exist within the context of small, contiguous spaces, the acquisition of remote, isolated territories was seen as a significant threat to the nation.

Concerns regarding the death of republican institutions were often converted into images of actual death in the rhetoric deployed by opponents of the Alaska purchase. In an editorial appearing April 9, 1867, for example, Greeley ridicules the notion that people could even survive the Alaskan climate by referring to an episode from Charles Dickens's serialized novel *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843–1844). Having come to the United States in pursuit of their fortune, Martin

[15] Historian Coy F. Cross II notes that Greeley initially discouraged migration to California on similar grounds, "calling the Great Plains and the mountain ranges an excellent national boundary" (11).

[16] Although we are accustomed to thinking of contiguity in terms of landmasses, John S. Whitehead notes that through the 1850s "water connected areas and made them contiguous, not noncontiguous. Mountains and deserts were what truly separated regions" (324). It was not until the latter half of the nineteenth century, as the construction of railroads rendered sea travel an increasingly obsolete method of westward travel, that "the whole concept of contiguity and noncontiguity changed" (328).

Chuzzlewit and his friend Mark Tapley are deceived into purchasing a tract of land in a settlement named "Eden," which they later discover to be located in the middle of a malaria-filled swamp. Greeley writes, "Martin Chuzzlewit bought town lots in the flourishing city of Eden, and found his front door in the middle of a swamp. The poor settler who goes to Sitka…to raise Wheat, or Barley, or Oats, will find that his fields are ice fields, and need to be cultivated with snow plows." By equating the Alaska territory with a swamp, Greeley characterizes it as a space fundamentally resistant to agricultural development,[17] and because swamps had long been associated with disease and death, this comparison allows Greeley to portray the Alaskan climate as equally deadly: "We have heard of people going to Russian America," he writes, "but never heard of anybody staying there except those who were frozen in the snow" ("The Russian Humbug").

In 1867, the image of men frozen in the snow had unmistakable connotations. For two decades, the search for British explorer Sir John Franklin's lost Arctic expedition had been a public obsession on both sides of the Atlantic. At the time of the Alaska purchase, exhibitions and moving panoramas depicting Franklin's lost expedition were still touring the United States (Potter 5). The figure of Franklin achieved such magnitude that it continues to inform British and U.S. perceptions of the Arctic in the twenty-first century. Historian Andrew Lambert even asserts that "at the heart of every Arctic story stands John Franklin" (22). As Jen Hill explains, the failure of the expedition and later reports of cannibalism among the lost crew precipitated a symbolic crisis which forced the British to recognize "the possible bankruptcy not only of the national masculinity embodied in Franklin" but also the British imperial project in general. "The

[17] Anthony Wilson notes that in the nineteenth century the term *swamp* was used in reference to any "area outside civilization whose geographical features—notably its treacherous mix of water and earth—render it resistant to colonization or agriculture" (XIV).

Figure 7. *Man Proposes, God Disposes*
Edwin Landseer

great blank Arctic expanse on which Franklin had promised to write an imperial narrative revealed itself to be a potent, life-taking force that turned on and absorbed the British explorer. As a result," Hill argues, "Great Britain might be compelled to envision itself as an icebound Arctic exploration ship: immobile, surrounded by hostile, uncaring forces, and shockingly vulnerable" (15). These national anxieties were displayed unflinchingly in Edwin Landseer's controversial painting *Man Proposes, God Disposes* (Figure 7), unveiled in 1864. The painting shows two polar bears devouring human remains amidst the wreckage and debris of Franklin's expedition. Though praised by many, Landseer's painting was shocking in its realism and brutality. Art historian Diana Donald argues that "it is impossible not to see in Landseer's ferocious and amoral beasts a symbolic stand-in for the human cannibals" of the lost crew. "The dislocation which Landseer conveys is not only the literal dismemberment of the corpses, but a deliberate tearing of the fabric of patriotic rhetoric, religious sentiment and idealism" attached to the expedition.

Beneath the farcical tone of the Arctic images attached to Alaska lurked similar apprehensions about the future of the United States. Though opponents of the purchase initially deployed these images to portray the territory as culturally and geographically alien, in

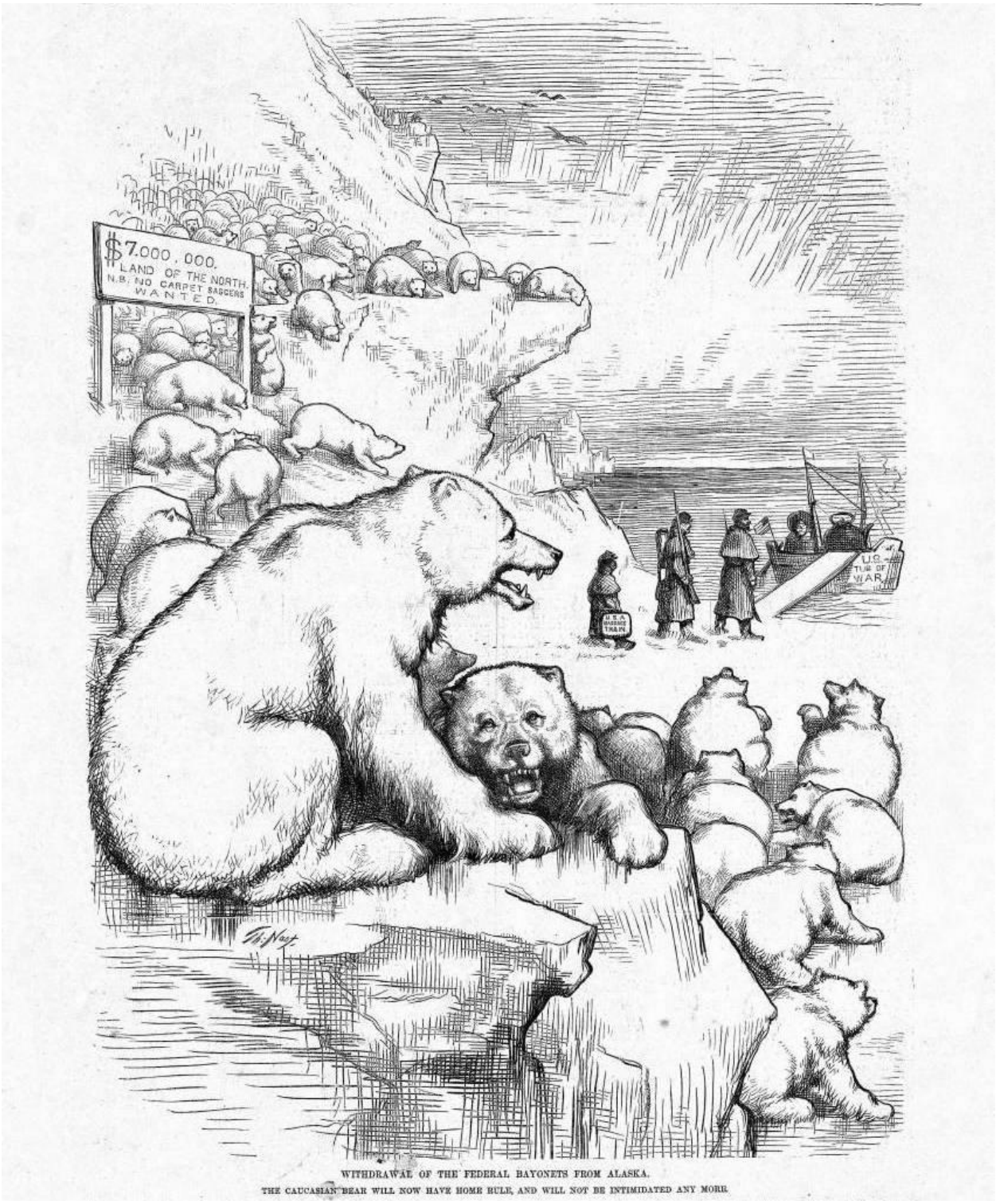

Figure 8. Withdrawal of the Federal Bayonets from Alaska
Harper's Weekly

subsequent decades Arctic images were increasingly utilized as a means of thinking about the nation. Rather than a distraction from the political controversies of the Reconstruction era, Alaska became a lens through which to interpret them. On April 22, 1877, *Harper's Weekly* illustrator Thomas Nast published a cartoon depicting the withdrawal of federal troops from Alaska, where they had been stationed since the purchase of the territory (Figure 8). Nast presents Alaska according to the negative stereotypes put in place by opponents of the purchase a decade earlier: Alaska is a mountainous iceberg, overrun with dozens of polar bears that look on as the few departing soldiers board a small boat, which is powered by a steaming tea kettle. The image clearly portrays federal efforts to control Alaska as utterly ineffectual, but Nast's captions reassign this image of U.S. military impotence to the South and the recent withdrawal of the remaining federal troops as part of the Compromise of 1877. Perched in the background, a sign reads "$7,000,000. Land of the North. N.B., No Carpet Baggers Wanted." A caption beneath the image reads, "Withdrawal of the federal bayonets from Alaska. The Caucasian bear will now have home rule, and will not be intimidated any more." These references to carpetbaggers and Caucasian home rule invite the viewer to see the end of military Reconstruction through the lens of Arctic stereotypes: the ice and polar bears purportedly rendering Alaska hostile to civilization become symbolic of the hostile white ruling class of the South, no more reconstructed than Alaska had been settled. The retreat of the federal soldiers to their tea kettle equates the Compromise of1877 with a shameful admission of defeat by a nation willing to abandon its responsibilities for a return to domestic comfort.

Though Nast's conflation of the U.S. military presence in Alaska with the military-enforced Reconstruction of the South may seem strange from the vantage point of the twenty-first century, nineteenth-century Americans witnessed the Alaska Purchase unfold

simultaneously with Congressional Reconstruction. The treaty securing the purchase of Alaska was negotiated and signed in the same month that the First Reconstruction Act passed into law, dividing the ex-Confederate states into military districts. For the next ten years both Alaska and portions of the South remained under U.S. military occupation, with news of the two projects appearing alongside each other in the press. The fact that the treaty was supported by prominent Radical Republicans like Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner strengthened its association with Congressional Reconstruction. Sumner in particular played an instrumental role in generating support for the purchase in the Senate, and his published speech "on the cession of Russian America to the United States" was one of the primary sources of information about Alaska available to the U.S. public in 1867. Sumner became so closely associated with the

Figure 9. *The Signing of the Alaska Treaty of Cession on March 30, 1867*
Emanuel Leutze

Alaska Purchase that Emanuel Leutze included him in his famous 1868 painting, *The Signing of the Alaska Treaty of Cession on March 30, 1867* (Figure 9), despite the fact that Sumner had not been present at the signing.

It comes as little surprise, then, that opponents of Congressional Reconstruction mobilized comparison with Alaska in order to magnify the controversy surrounding the occupation of the South. As Susan Kollin explains, Alaska's noncontiguity "threatens to dismantle myths of [U.S.] national identity" by "highlight[ing] the entangling alliances of imperialism the nation engages in but continues to repudiate." Since "U.S. national narratives" have "typically assumed that American development is continual rather than disconnected," Alaska's noncontiguity ensures that "the region cannot be narrated through the accepted paradigms of American national expansion" (*Nature's State* 7). Because the Alaska Purchase exposed the imperial ambitions of the United States in ways that other territorial acquisitions did not, it bolstered efforts to present Reconstruction as a violation of the republican ideals supposedly at the heart of the nation. In an 1868 speech, for example, Attorney General Henry Stanbery protested Congressional Reconstruction on the grounds that it treated the ex-Confederacy as "conquered provinces, not States."[18] "[I]f ever they were again to become States of the Union," he explained, they might be expected to come in by a new title, precisely as in some future day we may choose to make a State of the newly acquired territory of Alaska" ("Up with The Democratic Flag"). Stanbery thus instructs his audience to view the Alaska Purchase and Reconstruction not as separate projects but rather as two manifestations of the same phenomenon.

[18] Thaddeus Stevens advanced this conception of the southern states as "conquered provinces" in a speech before the House of Representatives on December 18, 1865.

Although this rhetorical maneuver was no doubt intended to provoke outrage on behalf of the southern states, Stanbery's comparison raises interesting questions in light of recent developments in Reconstruction scholarship. Over the last two decades, scholars of Reconstruction have expanded their focus beyond the traditional regional and temporal boundaries of the campaign in order to envision the postbellum reconstruction of the South as part of a broader process of national consolidation initiated by the western territorial acquisitions of the 1840s. "The history of the West," writes Heather Cox Richardson, "was part and parcel of the story of the reconstruction years and must be put back into it. Postwar 'reconstruction' was," according to Richardson, "the literal reconstruction of the North, South, and West into a nation in the aftermath of the Civil War" (4) As Stacey L. Smith explains, attention to this "Greater Reconstruction" seeks "to break the North-South regional stranglehold over [U.S.] national history" by reframing Reconstruction as "a continental story of multiple contests" of federal authority (574).[19] Though this continental perspective has invigorated Reconstruction scholarship, it has also ensured that Alaska and other noncontiguous spaces remain virtually absent from it.[20] This model of Reconstruction continues to imagine the continent as the container of the nation despite the fact that Americans in the Reconstruction era were being forced to acknowledge otherwise.

[19] The term "Greater Reconstruction" belongs to Elliott West, whose influential essay "Reconstructing Race" precipitated a shift toward a continental focus in Reconstruction scholarship by bringing it into conversation with western history.

[20] Conversely, regional historians of Alaska have yet to adequately explore the Alaska purchase within the broader national context of Reconstruction. Although some have recognized that Alaska and the South were both "colonial possessions begging for assimilation" during the Reconstruction era, they have typically concluded that the South absorbed the time and attention of Washington, "claim[ing] priority on the political agenda [and] in the public imagination" (Sherwood 6). However, if Reconstruction has eclipsed Alaska in the public imagination it has done so retroactively. As Nast and Stanbery demonstrate, nineteenth-century Americans could and did contemplate the two projects at the same time.

Recently, American Studies scholarship has grown increasingly skeptical of the continental paradigm. Brian Russell Roberts and Michelle Ann Stephens have called for "a decontinentalization of perceptions of US and generally American space, and a shift toward recognizing the Americas as a set of spaces that has been persistently intertwined with, constituted by, and grounded in the archipelagic" (17). Such a call raises significant questions about the future of Reconstruction Studies, a field which—even in its older, more regionally-delineated forms—was always concerned with the geographical consolidation of the nation within a continental framework. Can the study of Reconstruction dispense with this framework and remain coherent, or is the field wed to a continental model of the United States as its fundamental unit of analysis? Can an archipelagic turn in American Studies enhance the way we think about Reconstruction, or will it demand entirely new narratives of the late-nineteenth century United States?[21] Alaska provides a good starting point from which to explore these questions. As both a noncontiguous part of the North American continent and an archipelago, Alaska troubles continental perceptions of the United States in productive ways. Situating the Alaska purchase within Reconstruction allows us to contemplate the postwar consolidation of the United States from a perspective that does not hinge on the nation's identification with a continental structure. Furthermore, attention to Alaska reveals the Reconstruction era as a moment when Americans were profoundly anxious about what constituted national space, where the borders of the nation would be drawn, and on what authority those borders rested. In this context, writers began to reevaluate longstanding geographical assumptions about the integrity of the continent and its ability to delineate national and foreign space.

[21] Gregory P. Downs and Kate Masur have recently argued "that Reconstruction is not the most useful framework for making sense of the many histories of the postwar United States" (4). Instead, they call for "new framing questions and modes of analysis" that "move away from the assumption that the era can be encapsulated as some version of Reconstruction" (2, 5).

"The South Devil" and the Boundaries of the Continent

Set amidst the ruins of a Spanish plantation and the swamp that borders it, "The South Devil,"—Constance Fenimore Woolson's 1880 story of Reconstruction-era Florida—is rife with the tropes and exoticized descriptions typical of Florida local color. Since its 1880 publication in *The Atlantic Monthly*, critical readings of the story have focused primarily on Woolson's portrayal of the subtropical swamp, the titular "South Devil."[22] The central tension of the story derives from the two protagonists' opposing reactions to it: Carl Brenner, a musician and consumptive, is entranced by the swamp, repeatedly venturing into it under its spell, while his stepbrother Mark Deal "hate[s] the beauty of the South Devil," reluctantly entering it only to rescue Carl when he fails to return (168). Though it is clear from the outset that Carl has accompanied Mark to Florida in hopes that "the soft, balmy, fragrant air" will cure his illness, Woolson is more reticent with Mark's motive, generating suspense by repeatedly deferring this explanation (141). If Mark hates the swamp, why has he chosen to live beside it, in a culture and climate vastly different from his New England home? The first clue comes when Mark tells Carl, "I wanted to get to a place where I could be warm—warm, hot baked; warm through and through; warm all the time. I wanted to get to a place where the very ground was warm" (154–5). In this capacity, Florida serves Mark well, as it did countless tourists who wintered there in the late-nineteenth century. The story opens in late December, and yet the temperature reaches "eighty-six degrees in the shade" (139). As the narrator observes, "Everything was hot and soft

[22] Though William Dean Howells praised Woolson for "her forbearance" in "not extort[ing] an allegory from the malign morass" of the swamp in an 1887 review, contemporary critics have not agreed with Howells's assessment that "[i]t is a merely animal life which 'The South Devil' lives" (482). Instead, most have examined the story in an overtly symbolic register. For example, in what is the most extended analysis of "The South Devil," Kathleen Diffley reads Woolson's descriptions of "Florida's peculiar topography," and the plant and animal life it contains, as a metaphorical investigation of "differing paradigms for national reform and multiple postwar ways of seeing" (203, 196).

and brightly colored. Winter? Who knew of winter here?" (141). But when Mark's backstory emerges midway through the narrative, his desire to be constantly warm is revealed as a symptom of his traumatic experience as part of a failed Arctic expedition, of which he was the sole survivor. A narrative flashback finds Mark and the other crew members abandoning their icebound ship to walk

> doggedly across the ice, the numbing ice, the killing ice, the never-ending, gleaming, taunting, devilish ice...On the eleventh day a wind rises; bergs come sailing into view. One moves down upon us…Our ice-field breaks into a thousand pieces. We leap from block to block; we cry aloud in our despair; we call to each other, and curse and pray. But the strips of dark water widen between us; our ice-islands grow smaller; and a current bears us onward. We can no longer keep in motion, and freeze as we stand. (158–9)

The next morning, Mark is the only man still alive: "The others are blocks of ice…each solemnly staring, one foot advanced, as if still keeping up the poor cramped steps with which he had fought off death" (159).

Despite the spectacular nature of this passage, it has been largely glossed over by the story's critics, many of whom have ignored the Arctic subplot altogether. Those who have addressed Mark Deal's Arctic expedition have recognized it as a thinly-veiled reference to the Second Grinnell Expedition led by Elisha Kent Kane. That Woolson modeled her Arctic expedition on that of Kane—and that her readers would recognize this—is beyond question. She even refers to it as the "Kenton Arctic expedition," deliberately invoking the memory of the historical figure who had become a household name a quarter century earlier. In 1853, Kane set out to find John Franklin, whose expedition in search of the Northwest Passage had been lost

since 1845. After Kane's ship became icebound, he and his crew were forced to undertake an eighty-three-day overland march before being rescued. Although Kane's expedition was clearly a failure, Americans in the 1850s interpreted it differently: upon his return, Kane was celebrated as a national hero, and his bestselling narrative of the expedition would be read as a testament to the strength and endurance of Americans in even the harshest of environments. As historian Mark Metzler Sawin explains, Kane became a national icon not as a result of his actual accomplishments but rather through his ability to function as "a fluid symbol of American heroism that transcended many of the divisions that marked this turbulent era" (329). His ability to transcend these divisions was predicated on his association with the Arctic. As a space that "could be explored without being administered," the Far North allowed Americans like Kane "a place to flex imperial muscle without having to do the heavy lifting required by a colonial empire" (Robinson 12).

Woolson's revision of the Kane narrative, however, reflects a change in the way Americans imagined the nation's relationship to the Arctic. Though critics have acknowledged Woolson's alterations, they have not explained why she transforms a narrative of national triumph into one of disaster and death. "Only one man was lost during" Kane's "eighty-three-day ordeal," observes Sharon L. Dean, but "[i]n Woolson's version," only one survives (102). Kathleen Diffley notes that "Woolson's first readers would have remembered [that] almost all of Kane's crewmen returned from their desperate trek…across the icecap. But Woolson changed the expedition story to one of dwindling resources and wrenching farewells, a tale of stranded comrades as the ice field breaks up and they drift apart" (205). The body count grows even larger when one remembers that Woolson adds an entire second ship to those lost (Woolson, "The South Devil," 158). Despite Woolson's gestures to Kane, Mark Deal's expedition more closely

resembles the lost Franklin expedition, of which there were two ships and no survivors. Yet if we situate Reconstruction "in relation to" the nation's growing "campaign of imperialism" rather than "apart from" it, as Brook Thomas suggests, it becomes possible to see Woolson's fracturing "ice-islands" as a reflection of the iceberg imagery that dominated U.S. perceptions of Alaska during the Reconstruction era (5). By transforming the Far North from a symbolic stage to a territorial possession, the Alaska purchase brought the Arctic out of political isolation and into the very debates regarding U.S. imperialism and expansion which it had enabled Americans to ignore in the 1850s. When read as a metaphorical reenactment of the fracturing of the United States into noncontiguous territories, Woolson's Arctic disaster portrays the rupturing of continental unity as the beginning of an irreversible—and ultimately fatal—series of territorial acquisitions.[23]

Like Alaska, nineteenth-century Florida was often perceived as a colonial space detached from the rest of the U.S. As Michael O'Brien observes, the cultural legacy of Spanish colonialism rendered Florida "a remote orphan" in relation to the rest of the nation, and this cultural incongruity was often registered in geographic terms (20). Even though Florida is a contiguous part of the continental United States, in Woolson's time it was often imagined as "a virtual 'tropical island'" (Lowe 38). This transformation from peninsula to island positions Florida outside of the nation, allowing Americans a means of processing perceptions of Florida as "a subtropical colony of the North [rather] than an extension of the traditional South" (Meinig 223). Florida's geographic liminality was heightened by Americans' shifting perceptions of swamp spaces. Long imagined as sources of evil and death, swamps became emblematic of

[23] Fear of U.S. expansion run amok was neither uncommon nor unwarranted in the years following the Alaska purchase. An 1867 editorial appearing in the *Providence Evening Press*, for example, notes that various attempts at territorial acquisition following "the unauthorized purchase of Alaska"—that of St. Thomas, Cuba, and Hawaii—had "fully justified" a belief in "the possible evils that might result from the bad precedent" ("Cuba").

Southern immorality in the abolitionist rhetoric that proliferated in the years leading up to the Civil War. After the demise of the Confederacy divested these spaces of their symbolic value, the promotional literature of the emerging Florida tourist industry transformed the image of the Florida swamp into that of a semi-tropical paradise by disassociating it from the U.S. South and imbuing it with the "distinctly Edenic overtones" of the Caribbean (D. Miller 11).[24]

But if the image of tropical Florida offered Americans the fantasy of a return to Eden, it also generated anxieties of racial degeneration through the widespread notion that "warm climates produced dark-skinned people who were hot-blooded, emotional, and indolent." As Catherine Cocks notes, "this discourse" of climatic determinism "posited that people's character and well-being depended on daily temperatures and seasonal changes," and it was widely believed that people living beyond the influence of these natural cycles—in places like Florida and Alaska—"never grew up properly…remain[ing] careless children" their entire lives (217–8).[25] This anxiety of racial degeneration structures Woolson's presentation of Florida as a land of eternal summer. The natural indolence of Florida is embodied by Carl, who spends the majority of the story in various states of repose, while his older stepbrother, Mark, works hard "from daylight until dusk" restoring the ruined plantation. Mark's work ethic makes him unique in Florida, "probably the only white man in the State who" works hard every day in a land where "even the seasons were not task-masters" (143,146). While Mark's work routine makes him content to remain on the plantation, Carl's leisurely lifestyle engenders an obsession with the nearby swamp that blinds him to its dangers: "*I* didn't see any snakes," he retorts, when Mark

[24] For an examination of the ways that tourism boosters transformed the image of Florida by depicting it as "an enticing middle zone between the overly industrial North and the actual tropics," see Chapters 1 and 2 of Knight, *Tropic of Hopes*.

[25] This is one reason why white Americans have consistently depicted the Inuit as perpetual children. See Chapter 1 of Fienup-Riordan, *Freeze Frame.*

confronts him about the perils of the swamp (154). Yet Woolson does not dismiss Carl's perception of the swamp as a "beautiful…fairy-land," a perception which she herself shared (149).[26] Rather, she depicts both protagonists' perceptions as valid but incomplete: Mark cannot appreciate the very real beauty of the swamp, just as Carl cannot apprehend its very real dangers.

Thus, Woolson's dual protagonists allow her a means of expressing the ambivalence typical of local color representations of Florida at this time.[27] But though Woolson validates both protagonists' perceptions of the swamp, only Mark's reaction proves sustainable. Even as Woolson utilizes Edenic language in her descriptions of Florida, she revives the antebellum trope of the deadly swamp by consistently depicting it as poisonous, both in the life forms that it houses—snakes, scorpions, and spiders—and the "thick and deadly" miasma it produces (145). Despite the fact that Carl has come to Florida because of its allegedly healthful climate, his prolonged exposure to the swamp ultimately costs him his life, suggesting that the tropical South—much like the Arctic North—is a space in which white Americans cannot survive.[28] While the miasma of the swamp clearly damages the physical and mental health of the story's white protagonists, nonwhite characters are able to navigate the swamp regularly without succumbing to any of the maladies that afflict Mark and Carl. Scipio, an ex-slave who works as a cook for Mark and Carl, claims to know "every inch of the swamp," and yet Woolson makes no suggestion that his health is in any way compromised. Similarly, the unnamed hunter "of mixed

[26] In an 1885 letter to statesman and writer John Hay, Woolson describes seeing Florida "through a haze of enchantment…I went into all the swamps, I walked all over the barrens & beaches, I sailed up & down the lagoons, & paddled myself up all the creeks. And if it was 'a haze of enchantment,' it lasted through six long winters, & was never dispelled" ("To John Hay (Brown)" 304).

[27] Rebecca McIntyre notes that the exoticized representations of the "strange vegetatitve growths of the [southern] swamp," which appeared in countless travel narratives and local color sketches, satiated "the northern need both to praise and marginalize the South. As writers lauded the chaotic profusions of southern semitropical scenery, they also marginalized the regions by contrasting these southern aberrations with the calm, pastoral, and seemingly 'normal' landscapes idealized in the North" (69).

[28] Anne E. Rowe comes to a similar conclusion in her reading of Woolson's novel *East Angels* (1886), arguing that Florida "becomes representative" of an "Edenic lure [that] *must* be rejected" (42, Rowe's emphasis).

descent, having probably Spanish, African, and Seminole blood"—whom Woolson repeatedly refers to as "the mongrel"— is none the worse for his constant proximity to the swamp (165). When Mark leaves Florida at the story's conclusion, the abandoned plantation becomes "a princely home for the mongrel, who…established himself there permanently," underscoring the notion that he is naturally acclimated to the Florida environment in a way that white Americans are not (177).

Though Woolson's swamp stands in metonymically for the tropics as a whole, she situates Florida within the Caribbean when Carl's friend Schwartz absconds to the West Indies with Mark's life savings. Mark tracks Schwartz to the nearby town of San Miguel only to learn that

> Schwartz had been seen the previous evening negotiating passage at the last moment on a coasting schooner bound South—one of those nondescript little craft engaged in smuggling and illegal trading, with which the waters of the West Indies are infested. The schooner had made her way out of the harbor by moonlight. Although ostensibly bound for Key West, no one could say with any certainty that she would touch there; bribed by Schwartz, with all the harbors, inlets, and lagoons of the West Indies open to her, pursuit would be worse than hopeless. (162–3)

In addition to highlighting Florida's proximity to the West Indies, this passage establishes Florida's position within networks of illicit commerce which thrive in the ostensibly lawless and uncontrollable space of the Caribbean. As John Lowe argues, Woolson connects the moral bankruptcy of the West Indies to its swamp-like geography by having Schwartz escape to the West Indies instead of fleeing into the swamp, the traditional refuge of outlaws, runaway slaves,

and others seeking to elude the law (43). Her use of the word "infested" further yokes the waters of the West Indies to the Florida swamp, a space utterly infested with snakes and deadly insects. In short, Woolson portrays the swamp and the West Indies as fundamentally incompatible with—and hazardous to—the United States because, like Alaska, both spaces lack the geographic stability necessary for civilization to take root.

As Michele Currie Navakas observes, "[s]cholars have speculated that North American geographic fantasies of Florida's connection to the Caribbean and points south either voice imperial ambitions to annex Cuba and other parts of the West Indies, or express anxieties that the Caribbean was already too close and could 'contaminate' U.S. bodies, culture, and politics." However, she also notes that "if we read such fantasies more literally, they express first and foremost uncertainties about where the boundaries of the nation actually are and even what constitutes a boundary and a continent" (56). "The South Devil" reveals an acute awareness of the porous nature of the continent. By paring a shattering field of Arctic ice with the dissolving ground of the Florida swamp, Woolson presents a national geography that is liable to disintegrate. Thus, at a time when Americans were still narrating the reconciliation of North and South in the aftermath of the Civil War, Woolson replaces the ubiquitous intersectional romance of reunion trope of postbellum literature with a romance plot that resolves not through the symbolic reconciliation of North and South but rather through the symbolic exclusion of Arctic and tropical space. Late in the story, Mark confesses his love for Carl's cousin Leeza, explaining that his decision to bring Carl to Florida with him was motivated by the fact that both Carl and Leeza have the same blue eyes. Mark's heretofore inexplicable patience with Carl can thus be attributed to the fact that Carl functions as a surrogate for Leeza. However, Mark's homosocial relationship with Carl is preceded by another homosocial relationship with a man named Proctor,

Mark's friend and fellow Arctic explorer, who cares for Mark during their desperate attempt to walk to safety over the ice. These homosocial relationships—symbolic of U.S. forays into the Caribbean and the Arctic—must come to an end before Mark can establish a relationship with Leeza. As both Proctor and Carl fall victim to the deadly environments which they occupy, Woolson symbolically forecloses U.S. expansion beyond the continent, allowing a heterosexual—and thus reproductively viable—relationship to ensue.

At the story's conclusion, as the "old New England spirit [rises] within him" after Carl's death, Mark begins walking northward "up the long, low, white peninsula" (174, 177). This return to New England evades the anxieties generated at the fringes of the continent with a retreat to a region long imagined "as representative of national culture and as the source of universal 'American' values" (McCullough 11). By the 1890s, however, New England was no longer imagined as a safe haven from an external threat. By the time Sarah Orne Jewett wrote and published *The Country of the Pointed Firs* in 1896, New England had become emblematic of national decline, which was increasingly imagined as an internal problem that required an external solution.

Ghosts of the North in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*

Often deemed "the apogee of regional writing" in U.S. literature (Foote 15), *The Country of the Pointed Firs* has undergone a series of critical reevaluations which have kept it central to scholarly conversations about the genre.[29] Although regionalism and local color were long regarded as a minor, female counterpart to the male realist novel, the feminist reassessment of the genre in the 1980s positioned *Country* as the culmination of a literary tradition in which

[29] For a more detailed overview of these reevaluations, see McCullough, 15–21.

"New England women created a counter world of their own…that nourished strong, free women" (Donovan 3). In the 1990s, however, as scholars grew increasingly attuned to regional writing's participation in the "larger national literary effort of imagining America" (McCullough 19), critics began analyzing how Jewett's representation of the seemingly isolated community of Dunnet Landing is thoroughly engaged in the nationalist—and often nativist—discourses of the late nineteenth century.[30] As understandings of regional writing have shifted, so too have critical readings of Captain Littlepage and his tale of "a country 'way up north beyond the ice," where "fog-shaped men" inhabit a mysterious town which can only be seen from a distance (35, 37). For many years, feminist readings of *Country* relegated Littlepage's narrative "to the margins of critical debate," largely dismissing it as a mere "rhetorical counterweight to the text's promotion of a female-centered community" (Dowdell 225).[31] However, in more recent years, critics have explored how Littlepage's narrative provides the reader a framework through which to contemplate the decline of Dunnet Landing. Stephanie Foote, for example, notes that "Dunnet Landing functions for the narrator as a friendlier version of this polar spirit world," suggesting that "[t]he ghostly inhabitants who appear to populate the village at the pole are akin to the wasted old men and women who inhabit Dunnet Landing" (25). Holly Jackson has come to the same conclusion, arguing that Jewett portrays New England itself as "a strange northern country with 'fog-shaped' people suspended between life and death." By reading *Country* in light of late-nineteenth-century anxieties of "race suicide," Jackson contends that Jewett's celebration of the independence and freedom of Dunnet Landing's female population is also deeply "anxious that

[30] This "less celebratory" assessment of Jewett's fiction was spearheaded by June Howard's influential 1994 edited collection, *New Essays on the Country of the Pointed Firs*, which offered "a radically revised view of Jewett's significance" by exploring the "racialized and nationalist…categories through which Jewett constructs her local solidarities" (4).

[31] Elizabeth Ammons, for example, argues that Littlepage constitutes "an obvious parody of erudite masculine learning gone berserk" (90). Kate McCullough reads Littlepage's tale as a reduction of "the canonical American male Romance…from heroic quest to slightly tedious and self-indulgent story" (20–1).

the racial order so intrinsic to America's national identity might fail to reproduce itself" as a result (131).

Although the term "race suicide" was not yet coined when Jewett published *Country* in 1896,[32] the anxieties the term described had been prevalent since the 1890 census report highlighted both the waning birthrates of white Americans and the closing of the western frontier. Without the crucible of the frontier to prevent the overcivilization and decadence of white men, many feared that the U.S. had entered a new chapter of its history that could see the nation overrun by nonwhite immigrants with higher rates of reproduction. Theodore Roosevelt—largely responsible for popularizing the term "race suicide"—promoted overseas imperialism as a replacement for the now-closed frontier. Urging Americans to adopt "the strenuous life," Roosevelt advanced a racialized conception of national manhood that was inextricably linked to a particular vision of U.S. foreign policy: "[T]he nation that has trained itself to a career of unwarlike and isolated ease," he argued, "is bound…to go down before other nations which have not lost the manly and adventurous qualities. If we are to be a really great people," he continued, "we must strive in good faith to play a great part in the world" ("The Strenuous Life" 6). Utilizing the rhetoric of the white man's burden, Roosevelt proclaimed it the manly duty of the United States to see that "the people living in barbarism…are freed from their chains, and we can free them only by destroying barbarism itself" ("National Duties" 293). If the U.S. failed to do its duty, "[s]ome stronger, manlier power would have to step in and do the work, and we would have shown ourselves weaklings, unable to carry to successful completion the labors that great and high-spirited nations are eager to undertake" ("The Strenuous Life" 9–10).

[32] The term "race suicide" was coined by sociologist Edward A. Ross in a 1901 address, subsequently published as "The Causes of Race Superiority."

Thus, with the closing of the frontier, the male body—rather than territorial expansion—became the register of U.S. national power. As Amy Kaplan argues, the overseas empire became "the site for recuperating a primitive corporeal virility…an instinctual self [that] could only be recovered, paradoxically, on an externalized frontier remote from the United States." Where previous formulations of American empire "seemed discordant with U.S. democracy, the representation of that empire in the primitive male body figured reassuringly as a return to a fundamental Anglo-Saxon heritage…[I]n the revitalized male body, geographic distension and overseas conquest figure as a temporal return to origins, literally as nostalgia, *nostos*, the return home" (96–8). This racial nostalgia appears prominently in Jewett's writing, which often exhibits a version of the Nordicism that would become prominent in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Although critics identified Jewett's Nordicism as early as 1956,[33] critical discussion of Jewett's theories of race began in earnest with Sandra A. Zagarell's 1994 essay, "*Country*'s Portrayal of Community and the Exclusion of Difference," which reads Jewett's 1886 history of the Normans as an outline of her views on race. In *The Story of the Normans*, Jewett attributes the virility of the white race throughout history to a Norman lineage and the Viking blood of the "Northmen" of Scandinavia. She contends that "the great English and American discoveries and inventions and noble advancement," were all a product of "the glorious courage and steadfastness" of the racial legacy of the Northmen, who were militarily and culturally superior to all of the races they encountered. After conquering the kingdoms of France, the Northmen gradually became the Normans by turning their "energy…into better channels, and bringing a new element into the progress of civilization" (24). Though the Normans would merge with the Saxons after the conquest of England, Jewett attributes the vitality of the English to the Norman

[33] See Bishop, "Sarah Orne Jewett's Ideas of Race."

influence, asserting that "England the colonizer, England the country of intellectual and social progress, England the fosterer of ideas and chivalrous humanity, is Norman England" (356). She ultimately suggests that

> the people of the young republic of the United States…might be called the Normans of modern times. For with many of the gifts and many of the weaknesses (and dangers, too) of our viking ancestry, we have repeated the rapid increase of power which was characteristic of our Norman kindred; we have conquered in many fights with natural forces of the universe where they fought, humanity against humanity. Much of what marked the Northman and the Norman marks us still. (360)

Jewett's assertion that the people of the United States had "conquered" the "natural forces of the universe" reflects the sense of national pride generated by the westward expansion of the U.S. across the continent. But the fact that the North—the region often identified as the source of white racial superiority—remained unconquered posed a significant obstacle to the identification of northernness and whiteness. Though the Klondike gold rush would mitigate this problem at the end of the century, Jewett wrote and published *Country* in the period between the purported closing of the western frontier and Alaska's emergence as "the last frontier." During this period, the U.S. track record in the Far North significantly undermined the credibility of the United States as an imperial power capable of managing an overseas empire. An 1892 essay in *The North American Review* lamented that "Alaska is still in an undefined and experimental stage of its existence," despite the fact that the twenty-five years since the Alaska purchase had "witnessed the birth of [other] territories and their development into states." While this writer deemed the Alaska purchase "a great success" as a "business transaction," he maintained that "as

a political innovation and experiment its acquisition has not thus far produced any gratifying results" (Petroff 628).

Moreover, the paternalistic rhetoric of imperialists like Roosevelt did not harmonize with the reality of U.S. imperialism in Alaska. The fact that Americans had exploited the resources of Alaska without developing it politically, undermined claims that the U.S. was morally superior to Spain and would therefore be more humane and beneficent in its dealings with the ex-Spanish empire. In his 1898 *Atlantic Monthly* essay "Colonial Lessons of Alaska," Stanford University president David Starr Jordan used Alaska as an "object lesson illustrating methods to be avoided in the rule of our future colonies" (578). Jordan argues that as "a colony, or rather a chain of little colonies," Alaska has been "merely a means of revenue, a region to be exploited" (583). "Under the present conditions," he predicts, the natural resources of Alaska will soon be exhausted, "the native tribes starved to death," and Alaska "thrown away like a sucked orange." Jordan thus concludes that "we should count the cost before accepting 'colonies,'" and "[i]f we cannot afford to watch them, to care for them, to give them paternal rule when no other is possible, we do wrong to hoist our flag over them" (591). Thus, even at the end of the nineteenth century, Alaska still functioned as a space which compromised the self-aggrandizing imperial rhetoric of the United States. Rather than inducing a reversion to the racial greatness of some Viking past, the North remained a troublesome reminder of the nation's shortcomings. While *Country* is not explicitly concerned with Alaska,[34] the perceived failure of the U.S. in the Far North constitutes a crucial subtext for understanding Littlepage's presence in the novel.

[34] Alaska does briefly appear in Jewett's 1889 children's novel *Betty Leicester*. The protagonist's father, a naturalist who studied under Louis Agassiz, goes to Alaska to conduct research for a scientific book he is writing. Little is said about Alaska itself, beyond Mr. Leicester's statement that a trip to Alaska "will not be like a journey through civilized countries" (3).

Captain Littlepage appears early in *Country*, with four of the novel's first seven chapters devoted largely to his visit with the anonymous narrator. Though an elderly sea captain, Littlepage is consistently described as "charming in his appearance": his face is "thin and delicate with refinement," and "his careful precision of dress" suggests to the narrator the "cherishing care" of a female, though it is clear that Littlepage is "his own attentive valet" (22). The conversation quickly becomes one-sided, as Littlepage proceeds to relate at length "one of the greatest discoveries that man has ever made," which he "chanced to learn of" while stranded at a missionary station after being shipwrecked in the Arctic (24). While waiting for the supply ship that would take him home, Littlepage takes up temporary residence with an "an old seaman, a Scotchman" named Gaffett, who had also been an explorer in his younger years, and had also been shipwrecked in the Arctic. Littlepage recounts Gaffett's narrative, becoming increasingly enraptured in the process. What begins as a realistic "tale of dogs and sledges, and cold and wind and snow" becomes increasingly fantastical, as Gaffett and his fellow explores stumble upon the mythical open polar sea (35). Eventually, they strike "a coast that wasn't laid down or charted," where they find what appears to be "a great town" inhabited by mysterious, ghostly figures (36). Littlepage's narration here is worth quoting at length:

> It appeared…like a place where there was neither living nor dead. They could see the place when they were approaching it by sea pretty near like any town, and thick with habitations; but all at once they lost sight of it altogether, and when they got close inshore they could see the shapes of folks, but they never could get near them,--all blowing gray figures that would pass along alone, or sometimes gathered in companies as if they were watching. (37)

In the bizarre climax of Gaffett's tale, as the men set off in a boat, intending to leave this strange land, the gray figures attack "like bats; all at once they raised incessant armies, and come as if to drive 'em back to sea. They stood thick at the edge o' the water like the ridges o' grim war; no thought o' flight, none of retreat. Sometimes a standing fight, then soaring on main wing tormented all the air." Once out of danger, the men look back to see the town "standing up just as they'd seen it first" (38–9).

At this point, Littlepage has risen to his feet in his excitement, and the narrator attempts to calm him by suggesting that Gaffett's story was merely the product of a hunger-induced mirage, an assertion which Littlepage ignores. At the end of Littlepage's story, the narrator notices "a sudden change" in his countenance, as "the old pathetic, scholarly look returned. Behind me," she notes, "hung a map of North America, and I saw…that his eyes were fixed upon the northernmost regions and their careful recent outlines with a look of bewilderment" (41). The cognitive dissonance which Littlepage experiences when contemplating the recently mapped portions of the North American continent is generally read as evidence of his inability to distinguish between fantasy and reality. But while Laurie Shannon contends that it is the "suggestion of an unfixed cartography whose lines are 'recent'" that disturbs Littlepage (239), I would argue the opposite: what disturbs Littlepage is not that the newness of the lines suggests an unfixed cartography but rather that the lines are becoming fixed and the story he has grown so attached to has literally no place in the world that is being mapped. The "sudden change" in Littlepage's countenance is less a symptom of his delusional state than a sign of his nascent, perhaps even subconscious, awareness of his delusion as such. Littlepage is bewildered by the map, in other words, because in it he recognizes the demise of his cherished fantasy.

Throughout much of the nineteenth century, the Far North functioned as a repository for such fantasies. "In nineteenth-century fiction and poetry," writes Hester Blum, "the realms of ice were imaginatively encountered beyond the reach of geophysical or temporal regulations." Stories like that of Littlepage allowed readers "to step out of nation-time" and into a world seemingly immune to the disenchanting forces of modernity (5). Shane McCorristine notes that despite their purportedly scientific agendas, Arctic expedition narratives also fostered this sense of otherworldly wonder: "almost every nineteenth-century polar narrator touched on the subjects of mirages and illusions, whether referring to the shifting shapes of the ice or the strange way that sound travelled, or how small things in the distance seemed enormous. It is clear…that the fantastic atmospheric phenomena in the Arctic put into question the reliability of human perception" (13).

Littlepage's tale is strongly reminiscent of another story that captured the imagination of the U.S. public in the late nineteenth century, that of an eccentric Alaskan prospector by the name of Richard Willoughby (Figure 10). Widely known as the "Professor," Willoughby had become regionally famous by the mid-1880s as a tourist attraction. An 1885 Alaskan travel book describes Willoughby as "the first American pioneer in Alaska, a local genius, and a far-away, polar variety of 'Colonel Sellers,'[35] most interesting to encounter in this last region of No Man's Land" (Scidmore 124). Willoughby became nationally famous in 1888, when he claimed to have photographed a mirage of a city emanating from the surface of Muir Glacier. Willoughby named the mirage the "Silent City" (Figure 11) and began selling copies of the photograph for seventy-

[35] Colonel Sellers is a fictional character that first appeared in Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner's collaborative novel *The Gilded Age* (1873). Sellers has been described as "a warm-hearted, generous optimist whose resilience and enthusiasm for grandiose schemes never flag" (Rasmussen 426), "[a]n irresponsibly garrulous windbag" (Gale 1174), and "a penny-ante con man" (Camfield 541). All are apt descriptions of Willoughby.

five cents apiece. The back of the photograph contained a printed description of Willoughby and "The Glacial Wonder of the Silent City":

> For the past fifteen years Prof. Richard Willoughby has been a character in Alaska as well known among the whites as he has been familiar to the natives. As one of the early settlers of old Fort Wrangel…he has grown with the Territory and is to-day as much a part of its history as the totem poles are identified with the deeds of valor or commemorative of the past triumphs of prominent members of the tribes which their hideous and mysterious characters represent.

This portrayal of Willoughby as a quasi-indigenous figure who has "grown with the Territory" establishes him as a living piece of Alaskan local color, one that seemingly embodies the dawn of U.S. settlement of the region. The description goes on to describe Willoughby's "greatest achievement from a scientific standpoint" as that of "his tearing from the glacier's chilly bosom the 'mirages' of cities from distant climes":

> It was on the longest day of June, 1888, that the camera took within its grasp the reproduction of a city remote, if indeed not altogether within the recesses of another world. The
>
> SILENT CITY
>
> is here presented for the consideration of the public as the wonder and pride of Alaska's bleak hills, and the ever-changing glaciers may never again afford a like opportunity for the accomplishment of this sublime phenomenon. (qtd. in Jordan, "The Silent City," 162)

By inviting the viewer to interpret the image not simply as a mirage but perhaps a vision of

Figure 10. “Professor” Richard Willoughby
Alaska State Library, Historical Collections, ASL-P14-026

Figure 11. The Silent City
Alaska State Library, Historical Collections, Winter & Pond, ASL-P87-2738

"another world," this description ties the "Silent City" to the aforementioned history of Euro-American Arctic fantasies. Willoughby capitalized on this tradition, literally selling an Arctic fantasy to tourists. Yet the scope of this illusion exceeds the mere content of the image. The "Silent City" ultimately proffers a fantasy in which the technology of the modern world—embodied in the photographic process—becomes capable of capturing and reproducing the supernatural. Willoughby's image thus assures its viewer that technological progress can reenchant, rather than disenchant, the world.

However, the "Silent City" was not just an illusion. It was a hoax. The city in question was eventually identified as Bristol, and it was later discovered that in 1887, "while on a visit to Vancouver Island," Willoughby had purchased "a box of exposed [photographic] plates," one of which became the "Silent City" (Cole 33). This revelation came as little surprise to the scientific

community, who doubted the veracity of Willoughby's "achievement" from the beginning. In an 1897 article in *Popular Science Monthly*, David Starr Jordan addressed the hoax, bemoaning the gullibility of the unscientific masses. "It is hardly necessary," writes Jordan, "to call the attention of the intelligent reader to the absurdities involved in Mr. Willoughby's story and in the photograph which is its financial justification." "But there are many persons, not without education and culture, who believe without the least question any tale which is uncanny or which seems outside the natural order of things." "Even now," gripes Jordan, "every summer, some account of the marvel goes the rounds of the newspapers…As the sale of photographs declines, more persons will probably be granted a sight of the Silent City, and there will arise a new series of affidavits and newspaper stories" ("The Silent City" 164).

One can only speculate as to whether Jewett was aware of Willoughby's hoax while writing *Country*, though given its extensive media coverage and lengthy afterlife, this is certainly plausible. Regardless, the "Silent City"—and the public response to it— provides an illuminating counterpart to *Country*'s Arctic subnarrative, demonstrating that, like Littlepage, many Americans were reluctant to part with their Arctic fantasies. At the same time, however, the "Silent City" also reveals that the Alaskan tourist industry's commodification of Arctic images in the late nineteenth century had begun to supplant heroic narratives of the region. As an absurd parody of the white "native" of local color fiction, the figure of Willoughby contrasts sharply with the manly posture of the Arctic explorer. Rather than fostering a revitalization of national masculinity, pre-gold rush Alaska threatened to expose this fantasy.

CHAPTER III

WHITE WOMEN IN THE FAR NORTH

As we have seen, in the second half of the nineteenth century the Arctic became a troublesome obstacle for British and U.S. narratives of white supremacy. The midcentury disappearance of Sir John Franklin disrupted "[t]he Arctic relation of white man and white landscape" and, by extension, the "legible plot of national behavior and geographical triumph" which Arctic expedition narratives provided (Hill 13) Likewise, the United States' failure to successfully develop Alaska in the thirty years following its purchase accentuated the disjuncture between images of Arctic whiteness and racial whiteness, even while Americans grew increasingly invested in Nordicist racial theories that would collapse the two. However, at the end of the century, the Klondike gold rush offered Americans the opportunity to construct new narratives of Alaska that would realign these images and validate the logic of white supremacy driving the U.S. imperial project. Alaska became increasingly imagined "as a site of white flight, a new frontier where Anglo Saxon males could reenact conquest and reclaim their manliness" through wilderness adventure (Kollin, *Nature's State*, 63).

This fantasy rarely corresponded with reality.[36] Yet for the overwhelming majority of Americans, whose only experience of Alaska was the vicarious experience of reading about it, gold rush narratives did much to assuage fears of a failing white masculinity. For example, a 1909 article in *Harper's Weekly* titled "The New Man of the North" celebrates "the hardy race of

[36] See, for example, Hamlin Garland's 1899 *The Trail of the Goldseekers*, discussed in Chapter 1, in which Garland unsuccessfully attempts to realize his wilderness fantasies by joining in the rush to the Klondike.

Americans that is being reared in Alaska." "I do not remember to have met a single man living the outdoor life of Alaska who showed any lack of energy or, indeed, the slightest inclination toward laziness," writes the author. "The very air itself most assuredly is a mighty spur to endeavor. It is not in the least unreasonable to believe that the future Alaskan will be the most industrious man of the Caucasian race" (Norton 17). But what about the women?

At the same time that the Alaskan climate was being reimagined as a means of masculine rehabilitation, women from all walks of life were coming to Alaska in greater numbers than ever before.[37] Although wealthy female tourists had travelled along the Alaskan coast for over a decade, they had generally followed fixed itineraries and rarely ventured far from the steamships on which they soon departed. Before 1897 very few white women resided in Alaska for any significant length of time. The sudden increase in Alaska's white female population called into question longstanding assumptions about the relationship between gender and space. Arctic expedition narratives had long characterized the Far North as an exclusively male space, and scholars have shown that the discourse of Arctic exploration played an important role in shaping nineteenth-century notions of gender in both Britain and the United States.[38] The presence of white women in Alaska thus implied a breaching of the male and female spheres and the logics by which they operated. If Alaska was producing a "New Man" in the national imagination, it also required Americans to contemplate the "New Woman."

However, early narratives of white women in the Far North are generally less concerned with advancing the rights of women than they are with advancing empire. While these texts raise

[37] For an overview of women's experiences of the Klondike gold rush, see Mayer, *Klondike Women*.

[38] Lisa Bloom has argued that "polar exploration narratives played a prominent part in defining the social construction of masculinity and legitimized the exclusion of women from many public domains of discourse" (*Gender on Ice* 6). Similarly, Jen Hill has discussed how "[t]he separation the Arctic literally and symbolically demand[ed] between males 'away' and females 'at home'" prefigured the "the gendering of separate public and private spheres that both coalesced and gained ideological force as the century progressed" (7).

questions about the social and political role of women, they typically revert to conservative notions of gender in order to avoid posing a threat to white supremacy. In this way, Susan Kollin explains, "the New Woman was soon claimed by the dominant social order as a site where nationalist and imperialist ideologies could be linked to traditional views of middle-class femininity" ("The First White Women" 108). "By domesticating and white-washing the landscape" according to the standards of bourgeois femininity, narratives of white women in the Far North "effaced native claims to a region," further legitimating the U.S. imperial project (107). Although the writers examined in this chapter imagine women's contributions to U.S. imperialism in varying ways, their visions coalesce around largely conventional representations of women as wives and mothers. Yet by allowing American readers to imagine traditional domestic identities enacted in the Far North, these writers subvert the spatial connotations of the domestic sphere, unmooring the concept of domesticity—and by extension, the domestic space of the nation—from the contexts which previously defined it.

This chapter begins with an examination of Jack London's first novel *A Daughter of the Snows*, which takes up "the woman question" against the backdrop of the Klondike gold rush. I argue that London's failure to sustain a feminist vision of the novel's female protagonist illustrates the ways in which the racial ideology of U.S. imperialism short-circuits efforts to imagine a truly liberated female subject. I then explore the Alaskan fiction of actress and suffragette Elizabeth Robins, arguing that Robins presents Southerners—especially Southern women—as the ideal agents of U.S. imperialism. I then show how Robins's attempt to construct a feminist narrative of Alaska collapses under the genre expectations of the imperial romance novel. Finally, this chapter concludes by examining the writing of Josephine Diebitsch Peary, who accompanied her husband, famed polar explorer Robert Peary, on multiple excursions to the

Far North. I argue that by fashioning herself as a paragon of domesticity—and fixating on the whiteness of her Arctic-born daughter—Peary supplies a palatable narrative of Arctic exploration that mitigates gender and racial anxieties which her presence in the Far North generates.

A Daughter of the Snows

Though Jack London is widely regarded as a major figure in the naturalist literary tradition, his first novel, *A Daughter of the Snows* (1902), is better understood in relation to the romance novels that dominated the literary marketplace at the turn of the century.[39] As Amy Kaplan has demonstrated, these romances provided readers with "a cognitive and libidinal map" of the growing U.S. empire, creating "fanciful realms on which to project contemporary desires for unlimited global expansion" (94).[40] Although these novels present the white male body as the locus of U.S. imperial power, Kaplan notes that they also consistently portray "athletically daring New Wom[e]n" who abet their "own liberation by rescuing the hero and then embracing him in marriage" (100). In doing so, these romances invite women "to imagine themselves participating in the adventures of empire…The novels elicit the desire for liberation from domestic constraints through adventure and athletic activity, even as they channel that desire into the support of imperial conquest" (110–1).

A Daughter of the Snows is London's attempt to enlist the New Woman in service of U.S. imperialism. While some critics have acknowledged the feminist potential of the novel's

[39] Though the term "romance novel" has since come to designate a certain kind of love story, I am, of course, using the term in its older sense, in reference to a genre of long-form prose fiction "less committed to the immediate rendition of reality" and more likely to "veer toward mythic, allegorical, and symbolistic forms" than the realist novel (Chase 13)

[40] Though Kaplan focuses primarily on historical romances, she acknowledges a branch of the genre "set in contemporary exotic arenas of the colonized world," which operates according to the same principles (101).

protagonist, Frona Welse, most have avoided the text—and its overt white-supremacist rhetoric—altogether. Those who address the novel usually condemn both its repellant racism and the incoherence of its vision. As Jeanne Campbell Reesman observes, "*A Daughter of the Snows* seems almost perversely unwilling to adhere to any logic, sexual or racial, instead offering a confusing and clumsy pattern of slippages of gender and racial ideas" (*Jack London's Racial Lives* 75). Reesman acknowledges that the novel "can be provocatively discussed in reference to the American New Woman figure," but she ultimately contends that "Frona does not make a compelling or even believable New Woman" (67–8).[41] The novel's failure to sustain a feminist vision of Frona as a liberated woman illuminates a broader ambivalence produced by the presence of white women in Alaska.[42]

A Daughter of the Snows opens amidst the chaos of the gold rush, as Frona is returning to Alaska after being away at college. As the title of the novel suggests, Frona was born and raised in Alaska, having "nursed at the breast of nature,—in forfeit of a mother" (24). Her "primitive" childhood has instilled in her a unique vitality that sets her apart from other women and makes her especially desirable to the men she encounters. "There is a *woman!*" exclaims the first man she meets, who is seized by "a yearning to see himself mirrored always in" her eyes. Despite knowing virtually nothing about her, this man senses that "with her he could travel to the end of the earth," and he finds himself tempted to abandon his job "and strike out for the Klondike whither she was going" (12). Indeed, Frona herself possesses the traditionally masculine urge to

[41] In her essay, "Jack London's New Woman in a New World," Reesman argues that London's later fiction "demonstrates his feminist values" much more successfully (41).

[42] Nineteenth-century women themselves often harbored ambivalent responses toward life in Alaska which defy simple categorization. Analyzing the Alaskan diaries and letters of Libby Beaman—the first white woman to travel and live in the Pribilof Islands—Peter Kratzke argues that "westering women, while empowered by the emerging liberation represented in the 'New Woman,' were also grounded in…'The Cult of True Womanhood.' The resulting hybrid," which Kratzke terms "the New-True Woman," "demonstrates that *neither* historical concept can fully account for the actual conditions confronting real women living real lives" (140).

explore the most remote parts of the world and, as a young girl, once stole a team of dogs and went "over the Pass in the dead o' winter for to see where the world come to an ind on the ither side" (20). Frona's pursuit of "the strenuous life" persists into her adulthood. She brags about her ability to "swing clubs, and box, and fence," to "swim, and make high dives" and "chin a bar twenty times" (21). Despite having left Alaska in pursuit of education, "[t]he years of her culture had not weakened her. Though tasting of the fruits of the first remove from the soil, she was not afraid of the soil; she could return to it gleefully and naturally" (71). She wears a short skirt that does "not block the free movement of her limbs" and makes better time on the trail than most of her male counterparts (15, 32).[43] As Vance Corliss, the novel's male protagonist, observes, Frona "was something new, a fresh type, a woman unrelated to all women he had met" (73).

London underscores Frona's status as a New Woman by having her perform the role of Nora in a staging of Henrik Ibsen's 1879 play, *A Doll's House.* Both immensely popular and controversial, *A Doll's House* offers a bleak portrayal of a woman's life under the limitations imposed by traditional marital roles. Audiences across Europe and the United States were shocked by Nora's ultimate decision to abandon her husband and children at the play's conclusion. As Maroula Joannou notes, Nora became "the best-known theatrical embodiment" of the New Woman, and although Ibsen repeatedly distanced himself from the feminist movement, claiming that his interest was not limited to the emancipation of women but extended to that of all human beings, he nevertheless became a symbol of the women's liberation movement. Like many educated women at the turn of the century, Frona is described as "suffering from a stroke

[43] "Rational dress," which enabled greater female mobility than the elaborate costumes of previous generations, became an emblem of the New Woman. Patricia Marks notes that "The Woman who denied her body by dressing conventionally was a living affirmation that the female principle was the locus of purity and redemption, while the woman who made a radical change in her clothing forced a redefinition of virtue" (149).

of Ibsen" (132). However, her seemingly feminist ideals are complicated by her outspoken commitment to white supremacy.

Throughout the novel, Frona delivers multiple speeches in praise of the Anglo-Saxon race. "We are a race of doers and fighters, of globe-encirclers and zone-conquerors," she proclaims. "We toil and struggle, and stand by the toil and struggle no matter how hopeless it may be…All that the other races are not, the Anglo-Saxon, or Teuton if you please, is. All that the other races have not, the Teuton has" (83). Initially, Vance finds Frona's expressions of race pride ridiculous, but over the course of the novel his opinions change. "I can understand how the dominant races have come down out of the north to empire," he tells her. "The north has taught me, is teaching me. The old things come back with new significance" (146). It becomes increasingly clear that Vance's racial awakening and his desire for Frona are intertwined, as he begins to see her "as the genius of the race." Gazing upon her,

> The traditions of the blood laid hold of him, and he felt strangely at one with the white-skinned, yellow-haired giants of the younger world…the caverns of his being resounded with the shock and tumult of forgotten battles…he saw the sharp-beaked fighting galleys, and the sea-flung Northmen, great-muscled, deep-chested, sprung from the elements…The din of twenty centuries of battle was roaring in his ear, and the clamor for return to type strong upon him. (147–8)

For Vance, Frona functions as a conduit through which he can imagine his own racial greatness. Yet even as she facilitates this racial fantasy, her status as a New Woman—taken to its logical conclusions—threatens to undermine it.

This tension comes to the surface when Frona befriends the local prostitute Lucile in spite of Vance's protests. When Frona points out the gendered double-standard underlying Vance's

objection to their friendship, he accuses her of endorsing "new-womanish talk…Equal rights, the ballot, and all that." She responds,

> I am no woman's rights' creature; and I stand, not for the new woman, but for the new womanhood…Perhaps it is because you are unused to consistent, natural women; because, more likely, you are only familiar with the hot-house breeds,--pretty, helpless, well-rounded, stall fatted little things, blissfully innocent and criminally ignorant. They are not natural or strong; nor can they mother the natural and strong. (111)

This passage—seemingly an affirmation and a disavowal of Frona's feminism—reflects the convoluted logic of the novel's gender politics. The fact that Frona prefers the abstraction of "the new womanhood" to the embodied reality of "the new woman" is telling, as is her emphasis on the limited maternal capacities of the "hot-house" women of the domestic sphere. Both point to the fact that the novel's feminist aspirations threaten to subvert the racial logic underwriting the U.S. expansionist project in Alaska. To truly liberate Frona would mean compromising her identity as a race mother.

For this reason, London curtails Frona's liberation, preserving within her the conservative model of maternity which "has traditionally been the most successful disciplinary weapon used against women and…devastatingly effective in controlling the 'New Woman' in the early twentieth century" (Derrick 113).[44] London accomplishes this, Andrew J. Furer notes, by "never allow[ing] Frona to transform her 'free thought'…into consummated 'free love.'" Although she may defend Lucile, she remains "unable to act as if women had the same sexual freedom as

[44] Interestingly, Naomi Jacobs identifies a strain of women's utopian fiction in which frozen landscapes—usually in the polar regions—"become fertile ground for the female imagination and a place where radical confrontations and reconceptualizations become possible" (190). In these texts, "the regions of ice" are portrayed as "a realm of freedom in which" processes of sexuality, reproduction, and childbearing "need not become the ties that bind" (202).

men" (194–5). *A Daughter of the Snows* thus unwittingly illustrates how the racial ideology at the heart of U.S. imperialism ultimately short-circuits efforts to advance the rights of women. In order to enlist the New Woman in the service of imperialist white supremacy, London must deny her the freedom to put her individual desires ahead of the interests of the race. In the end, Ibsen's Nora—the figure London invokes to characterize Frona as a New Woman—becomes heavily ironic, less a symbol of what the novel desires than what it fears.

The Alaskan Fiction of Elizabeth Robins

Though best remembered as a suffragette and actress who played an instrumental role in bringing the work of Ibsen to the London stage,[45] Elizabeth Robins was also an accomplished writer, publishing numerous novels, stories, plays, and works of non-fiction over the course of her ninety-year life. Her 1907 play *Votes for Women!* has been called "the most important work to emerge directly from the women's suffrage movement" (Joannou 182). Robins's fiction, however, has been largely neglected by critics. During her lifetime, Robins's most famous book was *The Magnetic North* (1904), a novel of the Klondike gold rush, which garnered praise from prominent writers like Mark Twain and Edith Wharton. Robins had visited Alaska in 1900, hoping to reconnect with her brother Raymond, who had accepted a position as the Assistant Superintendent of Alaskan Missions for the Congregationalist Church in Nome. However, this was not her only reason for traveling to Alaska. "Her other motivation," according to Victoria Joan Moesnner and Joanne E. Gates, "was the need for the kinds of intense personal experiences the journey provided. She went in search of plots, language, characters, and landscapes she could use in her fiction" (6).

[45] For an overview of Robins's efforts to popularize Ibsen, see Joannou, 179–82.

After spending forty-two days in Nome with her brother, Robins traveled up the Yukon River, recording her experiences in her diary. The entry for August 25th describes her encounter with "Professor" Dick Willoughby, the Alaskan prospector who had become famous after circulating his fraudulent photographs of the "Silent City."[46] Robins notes that at one point in their conversation, Willoughby "said something about some troops being sent out to whip the Southerners…with a twinkly 'They're bad to beat, them Southerns'—and later when I being addressed as an Englishwoman said Kentuckian he beamed, 'Well you're all right then—a Kentuckian's all right no matter where he hangs out" (294). While it is difficult to ascertain, without context, the full significance of this exchange, one thing is clear: Robins earns a degree of cultural capital by laying claim to her southern heritage. In reality, Robins had spent almost all of her life outside the South, and although she retained her U.S. citizenship until her death in 1952, Robins had resided in England for the last twelve years, embracing British society.[47] As Iveta Jusová observes, Robins "felt a strong attachment to the English cultural heritage." Her "American background" did not prevent her from "becoming an Anglo-Saxonist patriot," nor did it "alienate her from the aristocratic and autocratic values and sensibilities of the upper classes" (121). Yet despite her affinity for British culture, in Alaska Robins identifies as a Kentuckian.

This investment in southern identity surfaces repeatedly in her Alaskan fiction. *The Magnetic North*—loosely based on her brother's experience of the Klondike gold rush—follows two southern men, Morris Burnet and George Warren, who are stranded on the Yukon River over the winter of 1897–8. Twenty-two-year-old Burnet, referred to throughout the novel as "the

[46] For more on Willoughby and this hoax, see Chapter 2.

[47] Though born in Louisville, Kentucky in 1862, Robins's family had relocated to Staten Island by the time she was three years old. After attending school in Zanesville, Ohio, Robins worked as an actress in New York and Boston before touring the United States with the Edwin Booth and Lawrence Barrett company. In 1888, she left America for London, where she would live the rest of her life.

Boy," is the fictional stand-in for Robins's brother Raymond. The Boy has come north in order to make his fortune so that he can buy back the Florida orange plantation where he and his sister spent their childhood. Warren, based on Raymond's partner Albert Shulte, is referred to as "the Colonel" or "Kentucky." Robins foregrounds the southern identities of her protagonists in various ways. "[I]n times of excitement," the Colonel reverts to the "lingo of his childhood," an exaggerated southern accent which borders on the ridiculous. For example, during an argument regarding whether or not a Jesuit priest should be allowed to dine with the men in their cabin, the Colonel exclaims, "Just shuah as yo' bohn that priest will eat his dinner in my cabin, sah; and if yo' going t' make any trouble, just say so now, and we'll get it ovah, and the place cleaned up again befoh our visitors arrive" (34).

Moreover, both the Colonel and the Boy indulge in expressions of plantation nostalgia that range from overtly ironic to seemingly earnest. Early on, while the men are building a cabin, the Boy begins facetiously referring to himself as the Colonel's "nigger" (30). Throughout the novel the Boy dances "plantation jigs" and "nigger breakdown[s]." He sings plantation songs in dialect on multiple occasions, bonding with the Colonel through their shared memories of the South. At one point, while the Boy is performing his minstrel act, the Colonel is described wearing an expression such "as the great masters, the divinest poets cannot often summon, but which comes at the call of some foolish old nursery jingle, some fragment of half-forgotten folk-lore, heard when the world was young" (80). Later that night, ruminating by the fire, the Colonel compares the absurdity of the gold rush and the futility of their plight to that of slaves: "You and me playing the Big Game with Fohtune. Foolishness! Klondyke? Yoh crazy. Tell me the river's hard as iron and the snow's up to the windah? Don't b'lieve a wo'd of it. We're on some plantation, Boy, down South, in the niggah quawtaws" (84).

These moments of cross-racial identification and mimicry in Robins's Alaskan fiction follow a precedent set by Arctic exploration narratives. Expressions of plantation nostalgia—both in the form of plantation songs and blackface performances—occurred surprisingly often on polar expeditions. As Tomek Mossakowski explains, the "singing of 'negro songs,'" functioned as a means of "[u]nifying the crew" by temporarily "eradicat[ing] class differences" and "reminding men of the power attributed to their white identity" (57). In some cases, blackface performance even provided low-ranking sailors with a means of airing their class grievances though a "pervers[e] analogizing [of] their predicament with slaves of the American South" (21–2). By the time Robins published *The Magnetic North*, a similar racial logic had surfaced in the plantation fiction which developed in tandem with the United States' growing imperial consciousness.

In the decades following the end of Reconstruction, the South was reconfigured as a model of U.S. national identity.[48] As historian C. Vann Woodward observes, by the late nineteenth century the U.S. had begun "looking to Southern racial policy for national guidance in the new problems of imperialism" (324). Jeremy Wells has explored how, by the turn of the century, the southern plantation had become an increasingly national symbol, "providing numerous writers new ways of imagining the nation's founding and development" as well as new "visions of the nation's future." Wells traces the origin of this literary movement to the fiction of Joel Chandler Harris, arguing that, "in addition to launching the postbellum plantation fiction" genre, Harris's *Uncle Remus* stories

[48] Interestingly, in 1892 Anna Julia Cooper attributed the rise of Nordicist white supremacy in late-nineteenth-century New England—discussed in Chapter 2—to the growing influence of the South in national culture. She argues that the southern fixation on bloodlines inspired the "little Puritan maidens of the North…to hunt up the records of the Mayflower to see if some of the passengers thereon could not claim the honor of having been one of William the Conqueror's brigands, when he killed the last of the Saxon kings and, red-handed, stole his crown and his lands. Thus the ideal from out the Southland brooded over the nation" (103–4).

> made the plantation itself seem a more significant space in U.S. culture by promoting a fantasy of cross-racial comprehension as one of the effects of white-black geographical proximity. They thus made the old plantation seem ahead of rather than behind the rest of the world, and they did so as the world itself seemed to grow smaller as a result of new technological developments and new U.S. and European imperial expansion into regions inhabited mainly by nonwhite subjects. (71)

Harris's fiction laid the groundwork for writers like Thomas Nelson Page and Thomas Dixon, who would portray the plantation South as a space uniquely successful in "overcoming the problem of multiraciality" and thus "a space that made men fit for empire" (5, 180).

The Magnetic North voices a similar logic through the Colonel, who takes pride in his southern heritage, using it to explain his presence in Alaska. When the Boy accuses the Colonel of coming north simply out of greed, the Colonel describes his perpetual sense of dissatisfaction as a product of the "good fightin' blood" that comprises the southern character:

> Tisn't as if we came of any worn-out, frightened, servile old stock. You and I belong to the free-livin', straight-shootin' Southerners. The people before us fought bears, and fought Indians, and beat the British, and when there wasn't anything else left to beat, turned round and began to beat one another. It was the one battle we found didn't pay. We finished that job up in '65, and since then we've been lookin' round for something else to beat. We've got down now to beatin' records, and foreign markets, and breedin' prize bulls; but we don't breed cowards—yet… (239)

In this passage, the Colonel attributes both the founding of the nation and its expansionist history to the indomitable nature of the southerner. While it would be reductive to read this speech as a simplistic articulation of Robins's own opinion, it is also true that she never contradicts the Colonel's rhetoric. Moreover, by having him die in dramatic fashion at the denouement of the novel, Robins ultimately positions the Colonel at the emotional center of the text, clearly presenting him in a sympathetic light.

"Monica's Village"

Yet when Robins began writing *The Magnetic North*, she did not envision it as the "male quest romance" that it became (John 120). Rather, she initially intended to compose a collection of "Yukon Sketches."[49] As the text gradually evolved into a novel, Robins cut significant portions, some of which she later published as stand-alone stories. In May of 1905, Robins published "Monica's Village" in the *Century Magazine*. Though the story features the same male protagonists as *The Magnetic North,* "Monica's Village" provides a markedly different vision of women's role in the U.S. imperial project. Robins's biographer, Joanne E. Gates, notes that "during her suffrage years, Robins read 'Monica's Village' at gatherings to raise money for the suffrage cause." The story's feminist elements have led scholars to grant it a more favorable assessment than *The Magnetic North*. Gates argues that "[w]hereas the novel presents an exclusively male world of adventure and comradeship, 'Monica's Village' stresses that the dominant values in civilization as we know it are male and that, when confronted with female power or influence, men respond by mystifying it" (136). Angela V. John praises "Monica's

[49]Robins's decision to publish a romance novel instead of a collection of local color sketches reflects the waning popularity of regional fiction at the turn of the century. Donna Campbell notes that as the United States "increasingly engineered the affairs of other countries…interest in the isolated or backward regions of local color lessened," leading many writers formerly associated with the genre to join ranks with the romance writers (55, 3).

Village" for providing "a more critical treatment of issues of race and gender than most of her Alaskan work, including a comment on the treatment of native Indians" (131). However, these positive readings of the story neglect the fact that its feminist vision is essentially that of the benevolent plantation mistress.

The story opens with the Boy and the Colonel lost in a snowstorm on the Yukon Trail. They soon encounter a pair of Indians, who direct them to a nearby village, which has been largely abandoned by its one-time occupants. "Famine and Disease were the masters of the camp," and only those who lacked the strength to travel remained (20). As the men contemplate the squalor of the Indian village, the narrator is quick to identify its source:

> The white man has not even set these people on his map, but they shiver in the white man's cheap cotton, having bartered their costly furs. White traders and prospectors have slaughtered caribou by the herd, and left them to rot on the hills…Lacking the wild meat their fathers flourished on, [the Indians] buy or beg a little flour, and come back here to die. There is no commoner story in the North. (21)

The white man's exploitation of the Alaskan Indian is soon illustrated by the character of Nathan Black, the Alaska Commercial Company agent whom the Boy and the Colonel meet shortly after departing the Indian village. The men set up camp together and soon begin discussing the "magnificent furs" which Black possesses. Black explains that he acquired one particular fur—worth over two hundred dollars in the United States—"from an old squaw who'd taken a fancy to a golf-cap" he was wearing. However, Black complains that furs have become difficult to come by, as "[t]he Indians are getting so almighty greedy." "Think what it must have been in the old Russian days!" he exclaims. "Why, a man could make a fortune in a single summer's

trading." Black notes that even a mere "twenty years ago" the "storehouses up here were literally bursting with valuable furs that cost next to nothing" (22–3).

When the topic of discussion shifts, the Colonel finds himself debating the virtues of women with Black's friend, a misogynistic young man from Washington. "In civilization," gripes the young man, "we forget, or we pretend to forget, that woman is really an inferior creature…What has woman ever *done*?" When the Colonel mentions motherhood, the young man launches into a tirade about the New Woman, asserting that maternity is

> the last achievement she takes any stock in. What with her rights, and her colleges, and her clothes, and her caprices…I'd just like 'em to come out to the Yukon and see what woman is really like—primitive woman, before we set her up on a pedestal and pretended she was as good as we are…No nonsense about the equality of woman when you get down to the bed-rock of nature…the natural man looks down on woman and treats her accordingly. No natural woman ever dreams of making a protest. She knows she is inferior, and she accepts the lower lot. (23)

Both of these conversations set the stage for the second half of the story, in which the men arrive at Monica's village.

Looking to buy fish to feed their hungry dogs, the men stop at the first hut they come to on the outskirts of the village. Though the Indians possess an abundance of fish, they refuse to sell any, instructing the men to go to Monica instead. As the men advance further into the village, they are shocked by the prosperity they see. "It can't be an Indian village," declares the Boy, "remembering all the squalid settlements…where the sick and starving kept watch by the dead" (25). While the other men set out in search of food for the night, the Boy proceeds to Monica's residence to purchase fish. What he finds astounds him. Monica lives in "a double log

house, solidly built, of workmanlike finish," which not only has glass windows but also a locking door. Upon seeing the manner in which Monica lives, the Boy's "anger at her blazed anew. The idea of a squaw setting up style like this!" Tellingly, the narrator indicates that "he indulged much the same scorn that his grandfather would have manifested catching one of his plantation negroes wearing a silk dress with a court train."

His indignation is interrupted by Monica's appearance. To his surprise, Monica is a tall, elderly white woman "with an air of majesty," "a mass of heavy white hair," and "high Roman features." Inside her cabin the Boy finds a dresser and "the only bureau he had seen since leaving San Francisco." The room is "carpeted with costly rugs, and lighted lavishly by candles burning in carved candlesticks of walrus ivory." In short, the Boy is "lost in wonder" at the picture of civilization he sees before him (26). When he explains his errand, Monica tells the Boy that Antoshka, the Indian who has led him to her, can sell eight salmon for three dollars, a price much higher than the Boy is accustomed to paying. Despite his protests, Monica refuses to lower the price. "[I]t's an old story for the white man to take advantage of the Indian," she notes, echoing the narrator's earlier statement on the matter. "You can't buy for less in this village." She also requires the Boy to pay Antoshka in advance on the grounds that "[t]he Indian has not always found the white man as good as his word" (27).

After the Boy concedes to Monica's price, he meets up with the other men who have been learning about Monica from the Indians. "As far as we can make out, Monica built this village," they explain, though her origins remain obscure. "'She seems to have the knack of getting some work out of the noble red lazybones,' said the colonel; 'makes 'em cut and haul her wood and bring her water; sends 'em out in squads to hunt and fish'" (29). One of the Indians affirms that "Monica heap mad if no plenty fish—no plenty caribou" (29). As a result, Monica

possesses large caches of food, which have prevented the village from ever experiencing a famine. Yet the Indians' obedience to Monica is not simply the product of her stern demeanor. Monica cares for the Indians when they are ill, even bringing sick children into her house until they are well. The Indians are thus devoted to Monica as if she were a benevolent "sorceress." When the Colonel asks whether Monica teaches the Indians to be Christians, Black suggests that "she's got her hands full teachin' 'em to be men" (29). As a site where coerced labor and benevolent paternalism aid the uplift of an "uncivilized" race, Monica's village embodies the plantation ideal as espoused by its defenders.

Though Robins herself did not explicitly defend the institution of slavery, her fiction reveals a sympathy for the Confederacy as well as a belief in the beneficence of the antebellum planter class. This is most obvious in her 1898 novel *The Open Question,* published under the pseudonym C. E. Raimond. The early chapters of the novel portray Sarah Gano, a southern widow who manages her husband's estate after he is killed during the Civil War. When she notifies her slaves of their freedom after the conclusion of the war, they beg her to allow them to stay. The narrator notes that Gano "had the well-earned reputation of being no easy mistress. But she had treated her slaves justly, according to her light, and this hour of enforced setting them adrift was bitter on other than political and economic grounds" (8). Later in the novel Gano describes the emancipation of the slaves as having "inflict[ed] the duties of citizenship all in an instant upon a barbarian horde" (32). Once again, it would be an oversimplification to equate the opinions of Sarah Gano with those of Elizabeth Robins. Yet as Iveta Jusová points out, the novel's representations of slavery are "told entirely from the mistress's point of view and in no way problematiz[e] her expressed position that slavery was a state desired by and favorable to the blacks" (100). Moreover, Robins based the character of Sarah Gano on that of her

grandmother. Robins's biographer Joanne E. Gates notes that "[i]n an unprinted preface to *The Open Question*," Robins describes the profound influence which her grandmother had on her, confessing that "hardly a trying event in her own life passed without her speculating upon how her grandmother might have reacted" (106). Gates also mentions an entry from Robins's diary which indicates that she initially planned to dedicate *The Open Question* to her grandmother (100). Clearly, Robins did not intend her readers to dismiss the opinions of Sarah Gano.

The resemblance between Monica and Sarah Gano is striking. Both are described as gray-haired women with an imperial air, who command and protect populations of color that willingly submit to their authority. Furthermore, while Monica's backstory remains vague, the text seemingly hints that she might have southern roots. During their short encounter, the Boy identifies in Monica's speech what may be the trace of a southern accent: "I rather think," he tells her, "from the way you soften your *r*'s…that your home must be in the same part of the world that mine is" (27–8). As the Colonel's reversions to southern dialect throughout *The Magnetic North* attest ("just shuah as yo' bohn," etc.), a softening of the *r*'s is the primary means by which Robins conveys the southern vernacular. By the end of the story, as the narrator rhapsodizes about Monica as a "daughter of the South," one might argue that this designation bears a double meaning, referring not only to the contiguous United States. When the narrator muses about the "old, unhappy, far-off things," the "battles long ago" that "made of this proud spirit a wanderer 'on the trail,'" one might think of the Civil War and the wounded pride of the South, so prevalent an image in the literature of the era.

The narrator provides no definitive explanation of Monica's history, only noting that "whatever the story…out of the strange, fierce battle that it must have been, had come for Monica peace with honor. For no woman on earth performs more faithfully the woman's task.

Monica is healer, nurse, protector. Monica is prophetess, not foreseeing only: forestalling sickness, woe, and famine. Monica is Mother of her people" (30). In the end, "Monica's Village" has much in common with southern romance novels like Thomas Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots* (1902) and Thomas Nelson Page's *Red Rock* (1898), which characterize a southern brand of white supremacy as the bedrock of U.S. imperial policy. But while these novels utilize female characters primarily in order to map "the imperial relationship of colonizer and colonized onto the domestic relationship of husband and wife" (Greeson 279), Robins reimagines the colonial project as one of "the woman's tasks." Rather than depicting southern white men as the ideal agents of U.S. imperialism, "Monica's Village" seems to portray the plantation mistress as the figure best suited for the job of governing nonwhite populations into civilization.

Come and Find Me

In 1908, Robins published her second Alaskan novel *Come and Find Me*. Unlike her previous Alaskan fiction, this novel follows a female protagonist, yet Robins's biographers are divided in their assessment of the novel's merit. Gates argues that with *Come and Find Me* "Robins rewrote the story of male conquest that had been *The Magnetic North* and redefined the Alaskan adventure as one of female faith, perseverance, and women's bonding" (149). The novel's "greatest achievement," according to Gates, "lies in demonstrating how the friendship of two women supersedes all misfortune and any reward…Robins, in short, was able to incorporate the free spirit of American women and give her heroine a scope beyond the traditional romantic plot" (151). Angela V. John, however, reads the novel quite differently. Though she acknowledges that *Come and Find Me* "includes some indication of Elizabeth's evolving feminism," she ultimately concludes that the novel's "ending and contrived meetings make it

ultimately little more than romantic fiction enhanced by sentimental drawings" (135–6). I would argue that these contradictory readings reflect the two storylines that comprise the novel. The majority of the novel follows Hildegarde Mar, who travels to Alaska during the Klondike gold rush. However, another narrative of polar exploration runs throughout the text. In the novel's final act, this second narrative overtakes the first, largely overwhelming its feminist vision.

It is worth noting that Robins once again leverages her southern identity, this time through a prefatory letter included in the text. Though this letter is ostensibly a dedication to her friend Florence Bell, its primary function is to allow Robins a chance to style herself as a southern lady. The header indicates that this letter was composed while Robins was visiting "Chinsegut," a former orange plantation in Hernando Country Florida, of which she was part owner.[50] The bulk of the letter is given to depictions of the estate and Robins's experiences of the subtropical South. "I am captive in a land of idleness," writes Robins, "myself idlest of all the easy, time-squandering folk" (ix). In addition to descriptions of the local flora and fauna, Robins portrays the black servants according to the conventions of local color: Peter, the cook, relays stories learned from "his mother who was born in the negro quarters here in those more sumptuous days" (xi). If Robins wanders too long through the "tangles of jessamine-laced live-oak and palmetto" with her dog "Dixie," she knows that "'Uncle' Fielding will be looking out for" her with "his kind dark face" and "the whites of his eyes shining" (xii). Thus, while *Come and Find Me* is less explicitly concerned with issues of race than Robins's previous Alaskan fiction, Robins's still frames her story of the Far North with scenes of plantation nostalgia.

The narrative itself opens in mid-1870s California, with Nathaniel Mar telling a young boy by the name of Jack Galbraith about his travels in Russian America a decade earlier. Mar

[50] Robins's brother Raymond, having lived nearby as a boy, purchased the estate in 1905 with Robins's money. They renamed the property "Chinsegut," an Eskimo word "signifying the spirit of things lost and regained" (John 137).

had journeyed there as a surveyor with the 1865 Western Union Telegraph Expedition and had discovered gold after having been shipwrecked near Nome. Lacking the resources to extract the gold—and suffering from a leg injury—Mar returned to the United States without telling any one of his discovery, hoping to come back for his fortune at a later date. But after nearly ten years, Mar has made no progress in this endeavor. However, his story of the Far North has a significant impact on Galbraith, who grows up to be a scientist and Arctic explorer, continuing to correspond with Mar throughout his adult life. The main plot of the novel follows Mar's daughter Hildegarde, who is infatuated with Galbraith despite having never met him. She relishes her father's stories of Galbraith, pores over his correspondence, and wears a picture of him in a locket around her neck. When Hildegarde befriends Bella Wayne—the new girl at school—she too becomes enamored with the romantic image of Galbraith. They even set up an altar to him in Hildegarde's bedroom, where they burn incense as a sign of their devotion.

However, their friendship is tested when, years later, through an unlikely turn of events, Bella meets Galbraith in Europe and they fall in love. Galbraith promises to give up Arctic exploration, and they are engaged to be married. Yet he soon goes back on his word, postponing the wedding in order to set off on an expedition in search of the North Pole. During all this time, a man by the name of Louis Cheviot has been unsuccessfully pursuing Hildegarde's affections. Cheviot attributes her unyielding devotion to Galbraith to her lack of worldly experience, telling her "if your life hadn't been so narrow, you wouldn't have been at the mercy of this one romantic figure in it. If you'd been able to travel, or even to go to the university—if you 'd had *any* other door open, you would n't have looked so long out of that one window" (139). In his frustration, Cheviot decides to join the Klondike gold rush as a means of distancing himself from

Hildegarde. Nathaniel Mar, with Hildegarde's encouragement, resolves to go north as well, hoping to claim the gold he had discovered three decades earlier.

After having spent the better part of a year prospecting in the Klondike, Cheviot is ready to return to California, but at Hildegard's request, he first goes in search of her father, hoping to persuade him to return home as well. Six months later Cheviot arrives back in California with the news that Mar's claim had been swiped by men who overheard his plans, and that he now refuses to return home empty handed. In light of this information, Hildegard decides that she must make the journey to Nome, as only her influence will convince Mar to return. However, Hildegard's motivation lies not only in this desire to rescue her father from another winter in the North; she also goes to satisfy her own desire to venture out of the domestic realm: "while other people have been going to New York and to Mexico, to London and to Paris…I've sat here in this little house…and sewed and planted a garden…and only *heard* about the world. I've done it long enough! I'm going to the North, too!" (218–9). It is worth noting that throughout this entire scene Hildegarde is dressed for a costume ball. She thus experiences this moment of female empowerment while dressed as Brunhild, the figure of female power in Norse mythology.

A significant portion of the novel is dedicated to Hildegarde's journey to Nome, much of which is derived from Robins's own experience traveling there in 1900. In her *Alaska-Klondike Diary*, Robins recounts having met a widow named Miss Cunningham, who was going to Alaska to work as a stenographer after having been impoverished by the death of her husband. "She tells me much of her life and work," writes Robins, "of her enforced close relations…with men—her low opinion of them on the whole. How she has managed…to walk oh so warily, not to let her frequent disgust cost her her bread and butter." The "[d]ark histories" which inform Cunningham's "knowledge of mankind" have left her convinced that "women will never be

secure and dignified till they have the ballot." Cunningham herself has experience voting in Colorado, where she also served as the first female Notary Public. Robins confesses that "the life and character" of Miss Cunningham "do more…to make a woman suffragist of me than any argument I ever heard" (51–2).

In *Come and Find Me*, Robins recreates this encounter for Hildegarde by deploying a fictional version of Cunningham in the character of Mrs. Locke. Locke is travelling to Nome to take a bookkeeping position that pays three times as much as her previous job. When Hildegarde asks her what she will do with the money, she says that she intends to "[b]uy freedom": "No woman's free," she explains "who has n't enough to live on without asking anybody for it. So I'm going to Nome to avoid slavery" (339). Locke, like Cunningham, tells of her experience voting and holding office, and when Hildegarde expresses her disinterest in politics, Locke informs her that she would "feel differently if [she] didn't belong to the privileged class" (341). When Hildegarde voices her anxiety that what she had seen and heard on the ship "would leave some sort of lasting stain" on her character, Mrs. Locke accuses her of "only thinking of what some man might think…Knowing doesn't hurt a woman," she asserts. "But it does change us. You'll find life will always look a little different to you after this" (352). In fact, Hildegarde has already begun to think differently about the social position of women, but her feminist awakening is soon challenged by the sudden appearance of Cheviot onboard the ship.

Over the course of the novel, Hildegarde has been gradually falling in love with Cheviot, a result of his unfaltering dedication to her and her father. When Mrs. Locke suggests that "[e]ven the best men have n't got so far as to want to respect *all* women," Hildegarde insists that if she knew Cheviot she would think otherwise (353). When Hildegarde discovers that Cheviot has been secretly watching over her in disguise, she becomes even more enamored with him,

eventually professing her love. However, Robins sets this romance plot in tension with Hildegarde's burgeoning feminism. When Hildegarde introduces Cheviot to Mrs. Locke—who has been nursing an injured arm—Locke identifies him as "the man who nearly broke [her] arm" while scrambling to board the ship in Seattle (386). This revelation triggers a momentary crisis for Hildegard. "Instead of being able to yield unreservedly to the comfort" of Cheviot's presence, Hildegard experiences "a counter influence…at work. A watchfulness, critical, even painful. Not so much of Cheviot as of herself. *Was* she the kind of girl Mrs. Locke had meant?—the kind who said, 'I 'm all right. What does it matter about other women.' Something in her soul revolted at the charge." Hildegard's emotional response is further complicated by the fact that her revulsion is mixed with pleasure at the thought that his actions—brutal as they may have been—were motivated by his devotion to her. She is left contemplating "the subtle danger of that solace, feeding self-love, divorcing her from her less fortunate sisters" (389).

Unfortunately, the novel does not pursue this tension any further. Instead, Mrs. Locke and Cheviot gradually warm to each other, allowing Hildegarde to move on from what is arguably the feminist climax of the novel without making any significant judgements save one—that Cheviot needs her to instruct him in the ways of feminism: "A light shone in the thought that there was something she could do for him that perhaps no other creature could" (398). The logic of the novel thus reverts to the Cult of True Womanhood, positioning the female protagonist as responsible for man's moral and intellectual growth. The novel's conclusion is similarly disappointing, as the Arctic expedition subplot largely overshadows Hildegarde's feminist awakening. When they finally arrive in Nome, Hildegarde is never allowed to leave the ship. Rather, after picking up her father, the three soon decide to board a whaler bound for Polaris, a mining camp in which Mar owns a stake. Upon their arrival, Cheviot and Hildegarde go on

shore, and while Cheviot attends to business in the camp, Hildegarde waits on the beach, eventually exploring what she believes to be an abandoned hut. In a moment of extreme improbability, she finds Jack Galbraith on his deathbed.

If Hildegarde's presence in the North occasions a reconsideration of the rights and responsibilities of women, the appearance of Galbraith reimposes conservative notions of gender by restoring an all-male world of polar exploration. Though Galbraith is the sole survivor of his expedition, he has successfully reached the North Pole. In an exchange reminiscent of the opening chapter of *Heart of Darkness*, Galbraith and Hildegarde discuss the allure of unexplored regions, "how precious those blank spaces are" and "how the kingdom of the unknown…soon shall vanish from the maps" forever (476). "[T]hink for a moment what a power the unknown has been in history," ponders Galbraith. "Think what it 's done for people—a mere empty space upon the map." When Hildegard assents that "it has made heroes," Galbraith corrects her: "It has made men" (477). The fact that neither Hildegard nor the narrator register any dissonance at this moment reveals how thoroughly the discourse of Arctic exploration subverts the feminist impulses of the novel. Though the plot hinges on a woman's journey out of the domestic sphere, in the end the novel shifts its focus to a realm which women can only know vicariously. Galbraith shows Hildegarde a crayon sketch of the pole before tearing it up and asking her to help him destroy all record of his discovery, so as not to spoil the "finest game in the world" for "the men who come after" (511).

Ultimately, Hildegarde finds herself unable to let Galbraith die alone in his hut, and she informs Cheviot, as their ship is about to depart, that one of them must stay behind to attend Galbraith. Bewildered, Cheviot chooses to remain behind, as Hildegarde and her father return to California. The end of the novel finds Hildegarde and Bella—both having lost their male

suitors—making a pact: "You and I will never let each other go," says Hildegard. "You and I alone together till the end." However, this moment of female solidarity is undermined by the last sentence of the novel, which describes "Louis Cheviot coming across the lawn" (531). Although the text clearly imagines Cheviot's return as a happy ending, this event completes the novel's abdication of its feminist vision. Though *Come and Find Me* entertains feminist notions of female community and sisterhood, it ultimately succumbs to the formal expectations of the imperial romance.

Josephine Diebitsch Peary's *Arctic Journal*

Although male-authored Arctic expedition narratives have received extensive scholarly attention in recent years, Josephine Peary's writing has often been overlooked. The comparatively meager critical discussion of her work has focused almost exclusively on her first book, *My Arctic Journal: A Year Among Ice-fields and Eskimos* (1893), which recounts her experience of the North Greenland Expedition of 1891–2, led by her husband Robert Peary. Linda S. Bergmann describes the text as "a woman's version" of the conventional Arctic expedition narrative. She cites Peary's "opportunities to wield authority among the men," as well as her participation in traditionally male pursuits like "exploring and hunting," as evidence that Peary felt "herself to be a member of the expedition" and a contributor to its success (61). Other critics, however, have been less optimistic in their assessment of Peary's agency. Lisa Bloom notes that by conforming to the standards of acceptable female behavior, Peary was "excluded…from participating in some of the expedition's varied chores and activities." According to Bloom, Peary's *Arctic Journal* reveals "the conflict between maintaining her respectability as a woman…and her desire to be an explorer" (*Gender on Ice* 39). More recently,

Heidi Hansson has analyzed how Peary "constructs herself as a lady" whose "primary task on the expedition is to be a reminder of civilization and home" (112). Hansson contends that while Peary's presence in the Arctic "challenge[d] the middle class gender order," her *Arctic Journal* ultimately "reaffirm[ed] conventional femininity by making it clear" that she herself did not "subscribe to any radical ideas concerning women's place in society" (107). In other words, Peary's text mitigates the anxieties attending her presence in the Arctic by supplying a portrait of traditional female domesticity that ultimately subsumes female agency.

Peary had utilized this rhetorical strategy long before she ever set foot in the Arctic. In her 1880 valedictorian commencement speech at Spencerian Business College in Washington D.C., Peary criticized the "very modest dimensions" of the women's sphere, bemoaning the fact that "[t]o cook, wash, and iron, sew on the inevitable buttons and even to work blue poodle dogs in green canvas in any possible hour of leisure have been considered a round of duties and pleasures that ought to suffice to occupy the time[,] the mind[,] and the heart of woman." Though her call for the increased education and employment opportunities of women resonates with the emergent feminist movement of the 1880s, she is careful to distinguish herself from the "New Woman" by presenting the importance of women's advancement in relation to childrearing. The expansion of women's knowledge and experience is necessary, she asserts, because it will furnish "the culture and training needed to secure the well balanced mind[,] the broad and generous nature of a good mother." She ultimately contends that "woman's horizon," must "be broadened[,] her mind and soul cultured to the limit of their capacity"—not for her own sake—but "that every one…who comes within the sphere of her influence may be safer and happier and nobler therefore" (qtd. in Erikson 264).

Similarly, throughout her *Arctic Journal* Peary repeatedly disavows her own interests, characterizing her presence in the Arctic as an act of devotion to her husband. Robert Peary himself introduces this notion in a preface, describing Josephine as "a refined woman" motivated "first and foremost" by "a desire to be by [his] side" (3). He then goes on to provide "two images" of Josephine which give him "a thrill of pride and admiration for her pluck." The first image is that of Josephine caring for him while he suffered from a broken leg, despite "the furious wind" of a storm that "threatened every moment to carry away" their tent. The second image is that of Josephine "calmly reloading our empty firearms while a herd of infuriated walrus…thrust their savage heads with gleaming tusks and bloodshot eyes out of the water close to the muzzles of our rifles, so that she could have touched them with her hand" (4–5). These scenes prepare the reader to imagine Josephine as a woman whose heroism lies not simply in her decision to venture into the Arctic wilderness but to do so in the service of—and subordination to—her husband. The preface also allows Robert Peary to claim Josephine's presence in the Arctic as evidence of his own proficiency as a polar explorer. The fact that a "tenderly nurtured woman lived for a year in safety and comfort" is "convincing proof," he argues, of the "great improvements" that "have been made in Arctic methods" (5).

Throughout her narrative, Peary sustains this rhetoric by emphasizing the security of her living conditions under the guidance of her husband. "It is astonishing how little I feel these low temperatures," she writes, noting that "Mr. Peary…always sees that I am properly protected. In many of the little details I should be negligent, and would probably suffer in consequence, but I have to undergo an inspection before he will let me go out" (103). Much of the text is given to detailing the various ways in which she is able to replicate the norms of bourgeois domesticity in spite of the Arctic environment. Peary consistently depicts herself as a dedicated wife and

homemaker engaged in various forms of domestic labor. She cooks, cleans, sews, and decorates. She ensures that the men observe holidays and birthdays, preparing dinner parties and festooning their living quarters with U.S. flags at every opportunity. In short, Peary presents herself successfully establishing a civilized home in the Far North that is both a credit to her own genteel femininity and a product of her husband's protective masculinity, which neutralizes the dangers and hardships of Arctic life.

However, Peary constructs this image of civilization against the "semi-savage[ry]" of the Inuit around her (132). Though a publisher's note at the beginning of the text describes her book as "a valuable contribution to ethnological learning" (2), critics have argued that Peary's observations of the Inuit do more to enhance "her own refinement…as a western, civilised woman in uncivilised surroundings" (Hansson 112). As Bloom observes, Peary's *Arctic Journal* is "noteworthy for the callousness she exercises toward her Eskimo employees, which rivals that of the most brutal of male explorers" (*Gender on Ice* 41). Throughout the text, Peary repeatedly voices her disgust regarding Inuit standards of hygiene. Shortly after the expedition party arrives in Greenland, she describes a "native ball," noting that "[s]everal of our boys went the rounds with Eskimo 'belles,' but for me the odor…was too strong to permit me to say that looking on was an 'unalloyed pleasure'" (14). She asserts that the "Eskimos were the queerest, dirtiest-looking individuals I had ever seen. Clad entirely in furs, they reminded me more of monkeys than of human beings" (41). Peary notes that the Inuit are routinely dismissed from the expeditioners' living quarters "during meal-time, as their odor is too offensive" (81), and she expresses her revulsion at the presence of Inuit women in her bedroom "on account of their dirty condition" and the fact that "they are alive with parasites." She goes on to describe the various steps she takes to disinfect the bedroom after they leave, which include sweeping the floor,

"sprinkl[ing] it with a solution of corrosive sublimate," and rubbing herself and her husband "down with alcohol every night before retiring" (90). Though she refuses to enter their huts—having heard rumors "about the filth and vermin"—Peary is persuaded to spend a night in an Inuit snow-house, an experience which she finds appalling (125). Not only is she repulsed by the "decidedly unpleasant atmosphere" and odor; she is mortified by the proximity of the Inuit women and their tendency to remove clothing with the rising temperature (128).

In addition to her harsh comments about Inuit men and women, Peary also disparages the children. She describes Inuit babies as "tiny, ugly creatures," presenting their alleged deficiencies as an embodiment of a broader racial degeneracy (106). "It seems odd to see the children so backward," she writes, recalling an Inuk child whom she once gave a bath. "This child, who is already two years old, has just begun to stand alone, and in all other respects she is like a child at home of ten months or a year. M'gipsu's baby is a year old, but in size and mental development compares with a five-month-old white baby" (165). Tellingly, Peary also refers to Inuit children as "piccaninnies." Although a footnote explains that "[t]he Eskimos frequently designate their children as piccaninnies, a word doubtless introduced by the whalers," Peary's use of this term inscribes the Inuit within a racial discourse which her readers would recognize. In utilizing the vocabulary of Jim Crow to depict the inhabitants of northern Greenland, Peary implies that U.S. models of white supremacy can be applied globally. Peary's *Arctic Journal* is thus not only an attempt to show that bourgeois domesticity can be recreated in the Arctic; it also suggests that domestic race relations are exportable as well.

The Snow Baby

By focusing almost exclusively on *MyArctic Journal*, scholars have failed to appreciate the full scope of Peary's self-fashioning and its racial significance. Although her 1901 children's book, *The Snow Baby* (Figure 12), outsold all of her husband's expedition narratives (Bryce xx), it has received little critical analysis.[51] First published in *St. Nicholas* magazine under the title "Ahnighito," *The Snow Baby* narrates the birth and early childhood of Peary's daughter Marie, born less than thirteen degrees from the North Pole. Marie was celebrated as the "most northern born" white child, and her parents capitalized on this status by assigning her an Inuit middle name—"Ahnighito," her primary designation throughout the text—and promoting her as the "Snow Baby." Throughout her book, Peary reinforces the racial connotations of this nickname by contrasting Marie's white skin with that of the "brown," "dusky" Inuit (16, 40). She describes Marie as "a little snow-white baby girl with big blue eyes," who captures the interest of "the strange people" of the North that have never before seen a white baby (14, 16). "[T]his baby was perfectly white," Peary declares, and yet somehow Marie manages to grow "whiter every day" (16, 19). She is so white that the Inuit "wanted to touch her to see if she was warm and not made of snow" (17). By conflating her whiteness with that of actual snow, this passage symbolically indigenizes Marie by granting her the image of one literally produced from the elements of the Arctic North.

In contrast, the Inuit become blots on the landscape, impurities that sully an otherwise pure region. Although the maternal tone which Peary adopts in *The Snow Baby* is much gentler

[51] One notable exception to this is Patricia Pierce Erikson, who examines how "Peary made the Arctic accessible to the American public" by "collapsing the distance that separated 'the home' from the diametrically opposed 'wilderness'" (269). One way she accomplished this, Erikson argues, was by curating her public persona as "the Mother of the Snow Baby" both in her writing and through her interactions with the press. Yet while Erikson productively expands our understanding of the scope of Peary's influence, she fails to analyze the racial overtones which made *The Snow Baby* popular with U.S. readers in the first place.

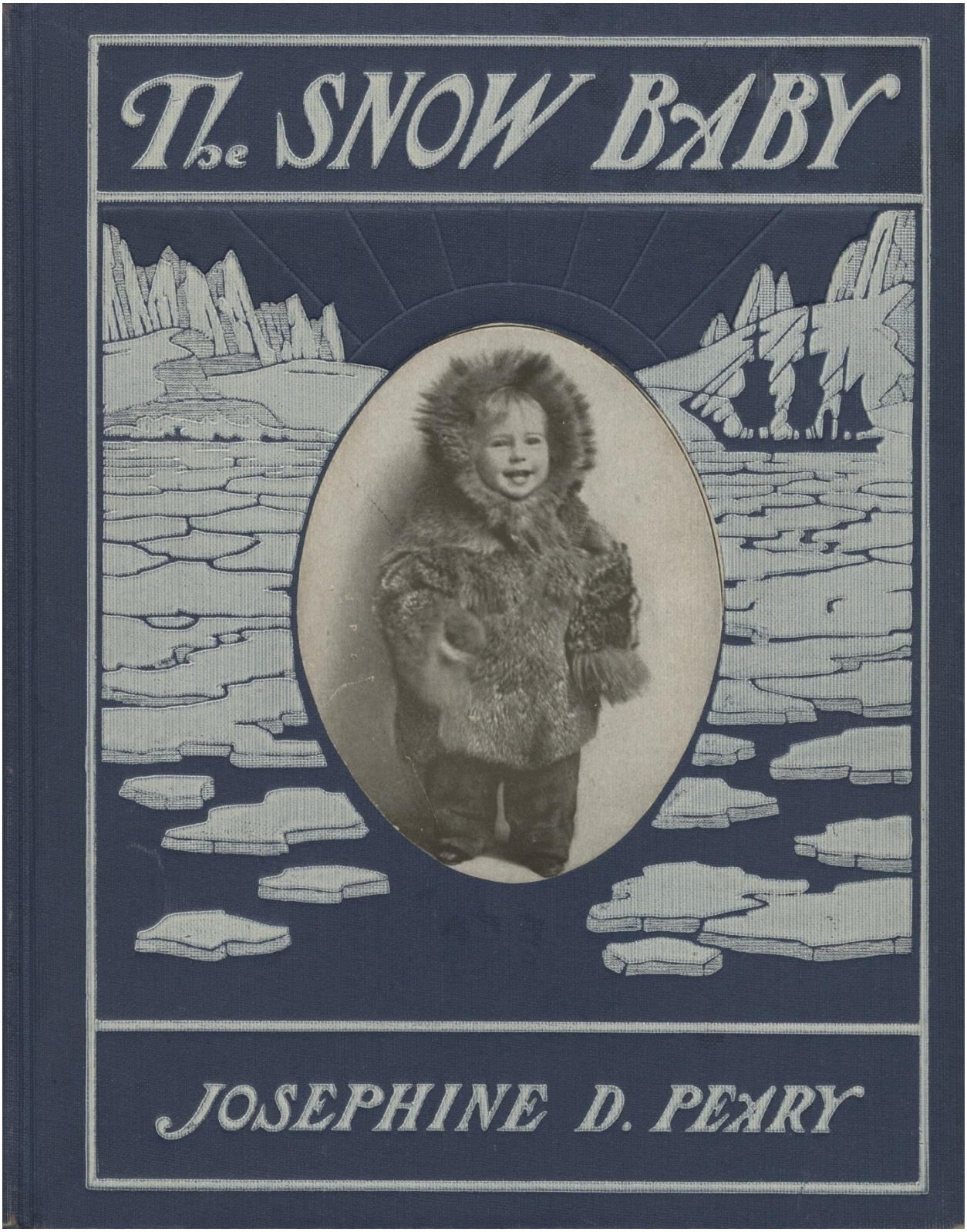

Figure 12. *The Snow Baby*
Courtesy of The Josephine Diebitsch Peary Collection, Maine Women Writers Collection
Department of Special Collections, University of New England, Portland.

than that of her *Arctic Journal*, she once again stresses the poor hygiene of the Inuit, thereby aligning whiteness with cleanliness. While Marie enjoys a "daily bath," "[h]er Eskimo friends" are not always allowed in the same room "as they were not very clean" (19, 20). "Bathing was unknown to them," writes Peary, until she and her husband introduced the practice (41). Peary thus utilizes her maternal persona to portray U.S. imperialism as a civilizing mission that will sanitize the Arctic by making the Inuit of northern Greenland more white. She notes that the Inuit living in southern Greenland have already become "almost like white people" through their contact with the Danish families living in the region. "The Danes compel them to go to school and also to church," writes Peary, and as result, the Inuit "have become quite civilized both in looks and in manners" (48).

Peary displays her contribution to this civilizing mission most explicitly through her relationship with "Miss Bill," a twelve-year-old Inuit girl who accompanies the Peary's back to New York to live with them for a year. Miss Bill "had never had a bath," explains Peary, "and she could not understand why she must wash herself and brush her hair every morning" (39). Peary then describes her efforts to instruct Miss Bill in the ways of civilization: "First, she must learn to talk, for of course she could not speak English; then she must learn to eat, for in the Snowland her people eat nothing but meat. She must learn that meals were served at regular times, that we bathed daily, and retired and arose at given times" (40–1). Although Peary implies that her efforts are successful, she also indicates that they are temporary, dissipating immediately upon Miss Bill's return North. "About two hours after landing" in Greenland, Miss Bill "was seen with a piece of meat weighing about five pounds, enjoying her first meal in a year" (44). When Peary and Marie return to Greenland a few years later, they find that Miss Bill "kept herself just as dirty as her companions" (56). Thus, while Peary portrays the Inuit as capable of

successfully adopting the customs of civilization, she ultimately suggests that this will not transpire without the constant management of white overseers such as herself.

By presenting Arctic exploration as a civilizing mission, Peary provides a palatable narrative of U.S. imperialism that distracts from its exploitive realities. Moreover, by foregrounding Marie's childhood experience of the Arctic, Peary is able to euphemize the less savory aspects of the expedition, most notably her husband's theft of three meteorites, which had, for generations, supplied the local Inuit population with its only source of iron. "These great pieces of iron were so wonderful," writes Peary, "that AH-NI-GHI-TO's father thought he would like to take them back to America, where every one might see them" (46). This statement deliberately misrepresents Robert Peary's motivations, characterizing the extraction of the meteorites as an altruistic endeavor when, in reality, he sold the meteorites to the American Museum of Natural History for a high price in order to continue financing his polar expeditions. In one of *The Snow Baby*'s most remarkable passages, as the last of the meteorites is being loaded onto Robert Peary's ship, Marie is "told that she must christen the big brown stone with a bottle of wine" (69). At the appropriate moment, Marie breaks the wine bottle against the meteorite and announces, "I name thee AH-NI-GHI-TO" (69). The joke, of course, is that Marie has named the meteorite after herself. However, in this moment the Pearys' cultural appropriation of the Inuit name "Ahnighito" overlaps with the literal appropriation of Inuit resources, revealing the two processes to be fundamentally connected.

Although *The Snow Baby* purports to be a simple memoir of a young girl's experience in the Far North, it is deeply invested in colonialism, actively working to conceal the injustices perpetrated against the Greenlandic Inuit. Yet this is not the only aspect of Robert Peary's expedition which the text seeks to whitewash. By the time she published *The Snow Baby*, Peary

had discovered her husband's Inuit mistress and the child which he had fathered by her. With this in mind, Peary's obsession with Marie's whiteness takes on additional significance. Her narrative becomes not simply an attempt to make her husband's Arctic project less exploitive but a means of reassuring her readers that racial boundaries were not being compromised. Marie thus becomes an icon of racial purity, a living testament that familiar racial categories persist even in the polar regions.

CHAPTER IV

STAGING THE ARCTIC: RACIAL PERFORMANCE AND IMPERIAL THEATER

At the end of the nineteenth century, as thousands of prospectors poured into Alaska in search of gold, the region finally began to resemble a traditional "American" frontier and the federal government soon took notice. Historian Roxanne Willis notes that "around the turn of the twentieth century, the federal government brought the tools of American civilization to Alaska," including an "expanded legal system, a homesteading law, and a provision for the incorporation of towns." In addition, the "U.S. Department of Agriculture began sponsoring experiments in Alaska, and the U.S. Geological survey explored for mineral deposits." Moreover, in an effort "[t]o facilitate settlement, the federal government began plans for a railroad that would connect the coastal port of Seward with the mining interior at Fairbanks" (14).[52] Yet despite these efforts to nationalize Alaska, statehood remained a remote prospect rather than an imminent reality. After all, Alaska had not even been officially incorporated as a Territory, and its large and dispersed indigenous population posed a significant obstacle to the political development of the region. In order to reimagine Alaska as part of the nation, the United States also needed to reimagine its relationship to Alaska Natives.

In the previous three decades, Alaska Natives—typically depicted as Eskimos—constituted a curious anomaly in the minds of most Americans. In 1890, *The Atlantic Monthly*

[52] For a more detailed analysis of the consequences of the gold rush for Alaska and the "massive response on the part of the federal government," see Haycox, 201–35.

published an article outlining "the marked characteristics…which distinguish" Alaska Natives from the nonwhite "peoples of the continent." "They are unlike the negroes of the South," the writer explains, in that "[t]hey have never been a servile race, nor have they been at war with the whites for a century, and then brought into subjection after defeat, and placed on reservations." As a result, "[t]hey have none of that resentment which the Indian Bureau finds so difficult to overcome in the case of the other native races of North America" (Keatley 210–1). Unlike the Indian tribes of the contiguous United States, whose existence threatened the legitimacy of white claims to the land and resources of North America, Alaska Natives inhabited a region, that most Americans deemed unfit for settlement. "Battles over territory, like those in the West, never occurred in the Arctic," explains anthropologist Ann Fienup-Riordan. "Most of the land was unsuitable for cultivation, so the Eskimos' maintenance of rights to the land and their refusal to settle permanently was not so contemptible. Well after the press of civilization had crushed the 'wild Indian,' 'noble Eskimos' prospered" in Alaska "because they were perceived as no real threat" (*Freeze Frame* 12–3).

However, the belated incorporation of Alaska at the turn of the century brought settler colonial racial practices to the region like never before. As Shari Huhndorf explains, Alaska's "changing demographics" in the wake of the gold rush "transformed social relationships between Natives and newcomers," leading "to Jim Crow-like segregation" and the establishment of "a racially exclusive 'American' society in Alaska" (*Mapping the Americas* 37). In the process, "Alaska Natives…were integrated…into racist social structures and categories that bound them to African Americans in the U.S. South" and other colonized peoples abroad (28). Nevertheless, just as the Alaska territory defied the geographical assumptions at the heart of late-nineteenth-century U.S. nationalism, the popular image of "the Eskimo" defied the binary racial logic

organizing turn-of-the-century American society. Even as Alaska Natives were being marginalized in many of the same ways as African Americans in the South, the two groups remained far from interchangeable in the white imagination.

As Wendy Hui Kyong Chun reminds us, race is not merely a set of cultural or biological categories but also a "technology" that "facilitates comparisons between entities classed as similar or dissimilar" (8). Historically, race has been "used to construct connections between—and indeed construct the very concepts of—public and private, outside and inside" (9). At the turn of the twentieth century, as the U.S. embraced overseas imperialism, race was increasingly deployed both as a means of mapping global populations and as a touchstone of national belonging. The widespread denial of African American rights in this period reflects the growing conviction that the United States was a white nation, racially qualified to govern the supposedly less civilized nonwhite populations of the world. At the same time, however, the technology of race could also be made to serve very different agendas than that of white supremacy. Though many nonwhite Americans were eager to distance themselves from the ranks of supposedly "primitive" peoples, others sought to leverage the racial ambiguity of "the Eskimo" image—and the ambivalent response it received from white Americans—in order to undermine the logic of segregation. In this context, cross-racial comparisons and performances between black, white, and Eskimo became a strategic method of reaffirming or contesting one's position in the U.S. racial hierarchy.

The first half of this chapter examines the evolving image of "the Eskimo" in nineteenth-century U.S. culture and the various representational modes in which it appeared. I begin by discussing the role which Arctic expedition narratives played in establishing the Eskimo as an object of white fascination and qualified admiration. At a time when Americans were growing

anxious about the supposedly emasculatory effects of modern life, Eskimos became increasingly idealized as the embodiment of primal masculinity, seemingly untarnished by civilization. By the end of the century, white explorers actively sought comparison with the Inuit, flaunting their adoption of indigenous cultural practices in order to present themselves as rugged masculine icons. I then analyze the living ethnological exhibits which swept the nation following their implementation at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Although these exhibits reaffirmed many of the racial stereotypes of the era, they often granted indigenous performers the agency to manipulate and subvert these stereotypes in profound ways. I focus specifically on Esther Eneutseak and Nancy Columbia, two Inuit performers who utilized their massive popularity to critique U.S. imperialism in the Far North.

The second half of this chapter considers ways in which African American writers engaged with the image of the Eskimo in the early twentieth century. I examine an episode from Sutton Griggs 1905 novel *The Hindered Hand* in which a mixed-race character escapes a lynch mob by disguising himself as an Eskimo and fleeing to the Arctic. I argue that in this moment Griggs highlights the unreliability of Jim Crow racial categories while also inviting his readers to contemplate the varied ways in which African Americans strategically perform these identities to their advantage. Finally, I analyze how Matthew Henson, the first African American Arctic explorer, negotiates the white-supremacist logic of the Arctic expedition narrative by strategically distancing and aligning himself with the Inuit in different historical contexts.

Arctic Expedition Narratives and the Image of the Eskimo

For most of the nineteenth century, Euro-American perceptions of the indigenous peoples of the Far North were derived from descriptions of the Canadian and Greenlandic Inuit that

appeared in Arctic expedition narratives. Although the populations depicted in these accounts did not reflect the diversity of peoples inhabiting Alaska, they nevertheless became the standard image of the region's native inhabitants. This image solidified in the political propaganda that proliferated in the wake of the 1867 purchase of the territory. As discussed in previous chapters, much of the early opposition to the Alaska Purchase was a reaction to the concurrent project of southern Reconstruction. Because Radical Republicans played a prominent role in garnering support for the purchase, denouncing it became a means of protesting the larger agenda of the federal government. Early images of Alaska and Alaska Natives were thus shaped by the political controversies surrounding Reconstruction, including the intense debate over African American citizenship and voting rights.

At the time of the purchase, the Fourteenth Amendment—which would grant citizenship to former slaves, promising them equal protection under the law—had already been proposed, and the prospect of African American enfranchisement seemed imminent. In response, opponents of the Reconstruction Amendments often deployed racist caricatures of Alaska Natives in an attempt to present nonwhite citizenship and suffrage as an absurdity. In reality, of course, no one expected Alaska Natives to be granted citizenship.[53] Yet for precisely this reason, the Alaska Purchase allowed white supremacists an opportunity to highlight the hypocrisy of the Radical Republicans, whose commitment to universal suffrage remained strikingly inconsistent. An editorial in the *White Cloud Kansas Chief*, for example, mounted a farcical defense of the Alaska Purchase, sarcastically predicting that "the graceful, handsome, energetic, intellectual and dainty Esquimaux" would become productive members of the body politic: "[T]hese highly useful and ornamental citizens…in the progress of the great principles of the Declaration of

[53] Alaska Natives would not become citizens of the United States until the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924.

Independence and Impartial Suffrage, will soon become intelligent and independent voters, and will be studiously courted by ambitious politicians." In addition to ridiculing the idea of nonwhite citizenship, this editorial mocks the notion that white Americans have anything to learn from nonwhite peoples:

> Our new brethren, the Esquimaux, are among the stoutest and hardiest people known. They subsist chiefly upon the flesh of the Walrus, which doubtless imparts this vigor. The United States had not a walrus in all her broad domain. By the purchase of Russian America, she secures an abundance of walruses. Who doubts that the result will be a speedy increase of strength and vigor in our people, and increased power to make other acquisitions? ("Value of Our New Acquisition")

By facetiously suggesting that the health of the nation may be improved by the consumption of walrus flesh, this editorial implies that the alleged superiority of the white race is obvious and that any suggestion to the contrary must be a joke. Ironically, however, this joke would soon become a reality. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, white American revulsion toward the indigenous peoples of the Far North was becoming increasingly tempered by fascination and even admiration. To be sure, perceptions remained ambivalent at best, and Native Alaskan citizenship remained virtually unthinkable to the U.S. public. But as white Americans grew anxious about the effects of industrial capitalism and its supposedly emasculatory effects on American men, the image of the Eskimo became increasingly idealized as that of the "natural man," uncorrupted by the forces of modernity.[54] Consequently, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Arctic explorers began to resemble the Inuit in their expedition narratives.

[54] Fienup-Riordan has traced the evolution of the Euro-American image of the Eskimo from its inception in the sixteenth century through the twentieth century. She notes that while the earliest European accounts portrayed the

Because the harsh conditions of the Arctic environment often required white explorers to embrace Inuit ways of life in order to survive, the Far North had long licensed a surprising degree of cultural adaptation. Contrary to the common myth that nineteenth-century British explorers "preferred to die as Europeans rather than live like the Inuit," historian Janice Cavell has demonstrated that "there was no expectation in Britain that the lost explorers would maintain their cultural identity at all costs. Instead, it was very generally assumed that they would, almost as a matter of course, go native in order to survive" (25). While the threat of going native was certainly a source of anxiety throughout the British empire, doing so temporarily, as a means of survival, was not believed to compromise the racial identities of the explorers in question who remained "white men at heart" even while living like the Inuit (33). The same was true for American explorers. When Elisha Kent Kane, the most famous Arctic explorer from the United States, was stranded in the Arctic in the mid-1850s, he and nearly all of his men survived by adopting Inuit diet and dress. Upon his return to the United States, Kane was celebrated as a national hero and the embodiment of national ideals. Not only was Kane's image untarnished by his adoption of Inuit survival strategies, Cavell notes that it actually enhanced his popularity both at home and abroad (33).

Heather Davis-Fisch has explored this practice at length through the writing of Charles Francis Hall, an American explorer who spent the majority of the 1860s in the Arctic, living among the Inuit and adopting their ways of life. Davis-Fisch argues that Hall "saw two ways to participate in Inuit life," which she terms "playing Inuit" and "becoming savage." "Playing

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Inuit as subhuman, by the late-eighteenth century the Inuit "were alternately depicted as Arcadians and as savages—simultaneously heroes and brutes…idealized as healthy, vital, and noble and at the same time condemned as rude, ugly, and barbaric" (*Eskimo Essays*14). By the nineteenth century, "Euro-Americans began to clothe Eskimos in a new, romantic image," and by the twentieth century the Inuit were typically characterized as "happy, peaceful, hardworking, independent, and adaptable…an image" that had become "increasingly acceptable because of its incorporation of traits Westerners valued in themselves" (16).

Inuit," she explains, "was temporary, trivial, and superficial and included actions like consuming Inuit food and wearing Inuit clothing." In contrast, "becoming savage" entailed "losing oneself, forgetting one's cultural identity in the performance." Unlike the "necessary and harmless" practice of "playing Inuit," "becoming savage" was both "gratuitous and dangerous, permanently changing the subject by contaminating him physically (through interracial sex) or spiritually (through false religion)" (91–2). Though white explorers rarely found themselves tempted to embrace Inuit spirituality, interracial sex was another story.

As W. Gillies Ross notes, "casual sexual liaisons between sailors and Eskimo women" were common, "usually during the wintering period, when large native camps existed near the vessels and the crews were idle" (121). The significant numbers of mixed-race people living in Far Northern communities made this readily apparent to anyone who traveled in the Arctic, but explorers knew better than to acknowledge this in their official accounts. While the published narratives of Robert Peary, for example, are careful to preserve his image as a paragon of white supremacy, the opinions expressed in his unpublished diary, though no less racist, would certainly have been unpalatable to white American readers, many of whom remained strongly averse to miscegenation. "It is asking too much of masculine nature," Peary writes, "to expect it to remain in an Arctic climate enduring constant hardship, without one relieving feature. Feminine companionship not only causes greater contentment, but as a matter of both mental and physical health and the retention of the top notch of manhood it is a necessity." Peary's readers would likely disagree with this assertion of the health benefits of interracial sex. They would also likely object to his subsequent recommendation that white men "take…native wives" so as to produce "a race combining the hardiness of the mothers with the intelligence and energy of the fathers. Such a race," contends Peary, "would surely reach the Pole if their fathers did not

succeed in doing it" (qtd. in Erikson 266). Peary would later father two sons by an Inuit teenager, a fact which he also never publicly acknowledged.

The discrepancy between the official accounts of Arctic exploration and its less savory realities indicates that explorers were consciously crafting narratives to satisfy the desires of a readership that cared less about the success or failure of an expedition than the manner in which it was conducted. As Michael Robinson explains, nineteenth-century Arctic exploration constituted a kind of "imperial theater," with the Far North functioning as "a stage for explorers to show the traits of character most cherished by Americans, traits that seemed threatened back home" (12). At a time when Americans had grown apprehensive about the perceived overcivilization of white men, Arctic explorers capitalized on these anxieties by portraying themselves reverting to supposedly "primitive" ways of life in order to survive. Doing so enhanced their image as rugged, masculine heroes and made their lectures and publications more appealing to middle class audiences. Because these accounts reached the public only after the explorers had returned to the United States, they stood as testaments not only to the ability of white men to rediscover their primal virility but also their ability to control it and return to civilization unmarred.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Inuit dress had become as much a costume as a means of survival, and the Arctic had become a site in which white masculinity was rehabilitated through a kind of cross-racial performance. Not unlike blackface minstrelsy, white explorers' embrace of Inuit cultural practices constituted, to borrow Eric Lott's phrase, "a simultaneous drawing up and crossing of racial boundaries," one that allowed Americans to indulge in their primitivist fantasies while simultaneously shoring up white supremacy (6). But while written narratives allowed explorers to exercise complete representational control over the Inuit, this

control would be compromised in the last decade of the nineteenth century by the rise of living ethnological exhibits, which brought the U.S. public face-to-face with Eskimo performers for the first time.

World's Fairs and Living Ethnological Exhibits

Living ethnological exhibits became common in the United States following their implementation at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, one of many tremendously popular world's fairs held across the United States and Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Marieke Bloembergen observes, these "world exhibitions were the new media of the nineteenth century," bringing together "huge crowds of visitors from every walk of life, for the first time in history" (13). The extensive coverage which these expositions received "in the national and international press" ensured "that they could perfectly well be followed from a distance" (5). By creating a shared sense of national affiliation between socially and geographically dispersed Americans, world's fairs played an important role in delineating the imagined community of the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. "American world's fairs extended and carried forward into the cultural realm the political efforts to reconstruct the United States after the Civil War" (Rydell, Findling, and Pelle 7). "[A]s part of a broader universe of white supremacist entertainments"—among them, the minstrel show—these expositions "offered millions of fairgoers an opportunity to reaffirm their collective national identity in an updated synthesis of progress and white supremacy" (Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*,6, 4). To that end, world's fairs juxtaposed displays of the material and cultural progress of the United States with exhibits of so-called "primitive" peoples from around the world. While the domestic displays were housed in impressive buildings that signaled their

utopian aspirations, the ethnological displays were typically relegated to the "amusement sections of the fairs alongside wild animal exhibits, joyrides, and other entertainment features" (7). As Burton Benedict explains, these living ethnological displays enabled "particular stereotyped impressions of certain ethnic groups" to gain "wide currency." The "performers soon became professionals, and audiences came to expect certain types of performances from particular nationalities or ethnic groups" (8).

Having been largely denied participation and representation in the World's Columbian Exposition, many African Americans saw the fair as an attempt to undermine the legitimacy of nonwhite citizenship. Anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells and others understood the exposition as a "cultural counterpart to the lynchings that claimed 161 African-American lives in 1892 alone" (Rydell, "Editor's Introduction," xiii). Working with a group of prominent African Americans that included Frederick Douglass, Wells published and distributed a pamphlet titled *The Reason Why the Colored American is not in the World's Columbian Exposition*. In her preface, Wells contends that "the greatest tribute to the greatness and progressiveness of American institutions which could have been shown the world" was "the progress made by a race in 25 years of freedom" after "250 years of slavery" (1). The pamphlet sought to supply this information in a chapter highlighting "The Progress of the Afro-American Since Emancipation." However, the pamphlet also contained chapters outlining "The Convict Lease System" and "Lynch Law," practices that undermined U.S. claims of progress and civilization.

The Reason Why was thus an effort to subvert the imperialist logic of the fair, which aligned whiteness with progress while presenting people of color as occupants of an earlier stage of human evolution. In his "Introduction" to the pamphlet, Frederick Douglass even accused fair organizers of attempting to humiliate African Americans by displaying only "savage" black

peoples: The United States "has brought to her shores and given welcome to a greater variety of mankind than were ever assembled in one place since the day of Pentecost," writes Douglass. "Japanese, Javanese, Soudanese, Chinese, Cingalese, Syrians, Persians, Tunisians, Algerians, Egyptians, East Indians, Laplanders, Esquimoux, and as if to shame the Negro, the Dahomians are also here to exhibit the Negro as a repulsive savage" (9). The "Dahomians," to which Douglass refers, were the Fon people of Dahomey who occupied one of the most popular ethnic villages on the Midway. Media representations of the Dahomey Village often ridiculed the Fon people as the epitome of African savagery and the antithesis of white American progress, which the fair celebrated.

Douglass was eager to distance himself and the image of the African American race from the "repulsive savage[s]" residing in the ethnological exhibits on the Midway. To be grouped with these races was, for Douglass, an indignity that deliberately ignored the progress of African Americans in the years since Emancipation. Moreover, contrasting African Americans with the Fon people of the Dahomey Village allowed Douglass to bolster his assimilationist agenda at a time when the emigrationist rhetoric of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and others was on the rise. On August 25, 1893, as part of the festivities of Colored American Day at the Columbian Exposition, Douglass delivered a speech rejecting the notion "that the only solution to the Negro problem is the removal of the Negro to Africa." Speaking on behalf of the race, Douglass proclaimed that

> we Negroes have made up our minds to stay just where we are…Today a desperate effort is being made to blacken the character of the Negro and to brand him a moral monster…But stop. Look at the progress the Negro has made in thirty years! We have come up out of Dahomey unto this. Measure the Negro. But

> not by the standard of the splendid civilization of the Caucasian. Bend down and measure him—measure him from the depths out of which he has risen. (194)

By urging white Americans to judge African American progress against a baseline of African primitivism—and by using the racially-loaded term "blacken" to describe efforts to discredit African American character—Douglass sought to utilize the racial logic of the Midway to promote the political interests of black Americans. However, Rydell notes that Douglass's attempt to leverage "the assumptions of evolutionary anthropology" would ultimately backfire. Rather than dissociating African Americans from Africans, as Douglass intended, "his argument had the effect of fueling dominant stereotypes of Africans," which "in turn, were routinely used by whites—especially white cartoonists—to debase African Americans" ("Editor's Introduction" xxxii–xxxiii).

Nevertheless, fairgoers reactions to the Dahomey Village were not as one-dimensional as has often been assumed. Christopher Robert Reed has argued that "the inordinate amount of attention" which the Dahomey Village received "is inexplicable except on the level of an eclectic interest…born of curiosity, fascination, appeal, and possibly grudging respect" (149). Reed notes that the Fon people "managed to become real, living persons" in the media, "personalized by the very use of their names…rather than the impersonal *the Dahomeans*" (148). This reevaluation of the public response to the Dahomey Village coincides with a larger scholarly effort to reconsider the dynamics of living ethnological exhibits. As Curtis M. Hinsley explains, it was long "assumed that lack of direct verbal testimony from those on display indicated relatively passive, even victimized acceptance of conditions." In more recent years, however, scholars have challenged this assumption "through closer attention to the individuals and groups on display, to

the often indirect but revealing voices and actions of those on the other side of the display ropes, and to audience responses" (35–6).

Despite their best efforts, concessionaires were unable to exert complete control of the representations of indigenous life which they curated. The history of the Eskimo Village concession at the Columbian Exposition illustrates both the abuse which indigenous performers experienced at the hands of fair organizers as well as the agency which they exercised in response. Extremely popular at both the Chicago World's Fair and subsequent expositions, Eskimo Villages were marketed as authentic portrayals of Arctic life. The three-acre Eskimo Village at the Chicago fair comprised a collection of huts and sealskin tents initially housing sixty Inuit men, women, and children, along with thirty-five dogs. The organizers were particularly proud of the genuine "Esquimau grave,"—complete with authentic human remains—imported from the Arctic and reconstructed in the exhibit (Raibmon 39). The living residents of the village were expected to give "demonstrations of kayaking, dog-sledding, native music, and hunting and fishing methods" while also manufacturing "native ornaments, carvings in ivory, spears, bows and arrows, canoes and sledges and native garments" (Harper and Potter 49–50).

While the Fair itself did not open until May, the Eskimo Village concession opened six months earlier, and as a result, the Inuit were forced to endure the Chicago winter in their unheated, uninsulated sheds. Later, when the temperature rose unseasonably high, exceeding seventy degrees, the Inuit were required to continue performing in their furs so as not to shatter the exhibit's illusion of authenticity. When two of the Inuit men "came out of their huts attired in blue jeans, leaving their furs behind," their "employers locked them in their huts until they agreed to comply with orders" (Raibmon 39–40). Tensions came to a head ten days before the

opening of the Exposition, when thirty-seven Inuit walked out of the concession, some of which went on to establish an independent Eskimo Village directly outside of the fair grounds. By the closing of the fair, only two Inuit families still resided in the original Eskimo Village (Hinsley 40–5). Thus, while indigenous performers were often exploited by concessionaires looking to turn a profit, they were also capable of resisting that exploitation.

Moreover, though living ethnological exhibits often reaffirmed racial stereotypes, they also offered the indigenous performers the chance to undermine audience expectations. As Paige Raibmon observes, these performances "could bring economic, cultural, and political gains":

> Through self-representation that conformed to colonial expectations, Aboriginal people also gained access to an international public forum where they could make dynamic assertions of identity, culture, and politics to White audiences. For indigenous people, the very act of entering this international public sphere contradicted the colonial cast of them as 'backward cultural conservators' and challenged their exclusion from modernity. (11)

As we will see, by the 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, Eskimo performers had begun using living ethnological exhibits as a platform from which to boldly critique U.S. imperialism in the Far North.

The Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition

In his contribution to *The Reason Why*, F. L Barnett—journalist, lawyer, and future husband of Ida B. Wells—bemoaned the fact that Columbian Exposition organizers were more concerned with the inclusion of Alaska than the inclusion of African Americans. "When it was ascertained that the seals and glaciers of Alaska had been overlooked," writes Barnett, "it was a

comparatively easy task for the President to manipulate matters so that he could give that far away land a representative on the National Board. It was entirely different, however, with the colored people" (73–4). Barnett's statement shows that in 1893 Alaska was still not imagined as a significant part of the United States. However, even as an afterthought, the inclusion of Alaska at the Chicago exposition reveals the growing imperial ambitions of the United States that would take center stage in the first decade of the twentieth century.

In 1909, turn-of-the-century efforts to promote Alaska as an integral part of the nation's future culminated with the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition (AYP). Held in Seattle—a city which experienced tremendous growth as a direct result of the gold rush[55]—the AYP cast the north Pacific coast as the seat of U.S. empire. To that end, the AYP showcased the resources and development of Alaska and the Pacific Northwest more broadly, while forecasting the importance of transpacific trade in the twentieth century. Advertisements and promotional materials made this agenda explicit, positioning Alaska at the nexus of national and international progress. One postcard for the AYP shows the statue of liberty imposed over a map of Alaska, with a collection of ribbons radiating from the statue's left hand to various nations attending the fair (Figure 13). This image affirms Alaska's position in the United States both by suggesting that American ideals and institutions have arrived in Alaska and by conflating U.S. nationalism with imperialism and an expanded role on the world stage. The AYP thus offered Alaska's white residents an ideal opportunity to redefine the image of the region.

As Josh Reid observes, those in charge of organizing and decorating the exposition's Alaska Building "craft[ed] a settler colonial identity…by highlighting farming efforts, education and the activities of women and families." The totem poles, which characterized the Alaskan

[55] In the years between 1893 and 1900, the population of Seattle grew from a mere 3,533 to 80,671 (Yahr 304).

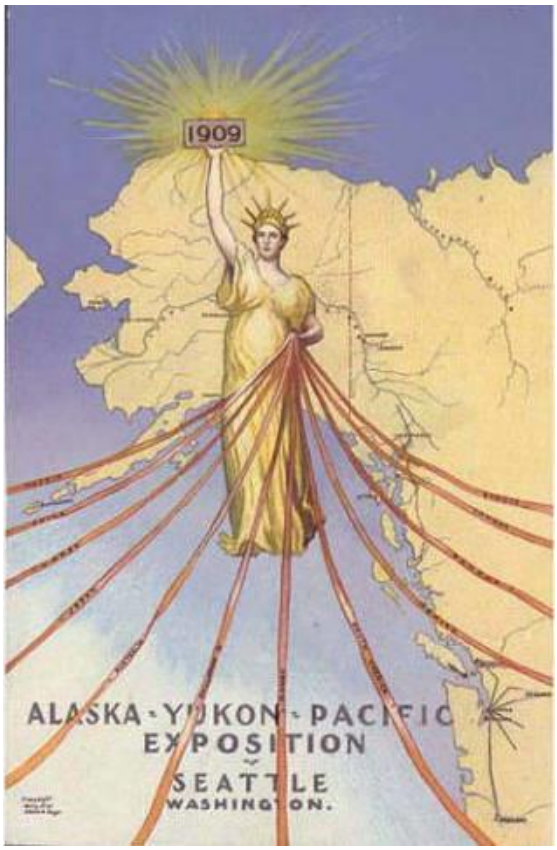

Figure 13. Postcard Advertising the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition
University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, AYP257

exhibits of previous world's fairs, were notably absent from the décor of the stately building. "Fair organizers and visitors alike saw totem poles as indigenous icons," explains Reid, "and their presence seemed more appropriate to a colonial holding than to a settler-colonial frontier that was home to Euro-American homesteaders" (115). Although the Alaska building housed exhibits of Native artifacts in glass display cases—cramming "Eskimo, Tlingit, and Aleut objects" together "without proper labels or cataloguing" (Yahr 309)—there was nothing that would suggest the ongoing presence of indigenous peoples in Alaska. Alaska Natives themselves, Reid explains, were relegated to "the Eskimo Village concession, far from the Alaska Building and the territorial aspirations expressed by the white newcomers to the region" (116).

Figure 14. The Eskimo Village at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition
University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, AYP613

The Eskimo Village (Figure 14) was perhaps the most popular of the many ethnological exhibits which lined the "Pay Streak," the amusement district of the AYP.[56] However, as Lisa Blee notes, "[t]he term *Eskimo Village* is a gross generalization that does not reflect the diversity of the participants, which included Inuit, Yup'ik, Iñupiaq, Siberian Yupik, Tlingit (Chilkat, Hoonah, and Taku), and unnamed other peoples" (127). Far from an authentic representation of indigenous life in the Far North, the Eskimo Village brought Alaska Natives together with Canadian and Greenlandic Inuit, further cementing their conflation in the white American imagination. The AYP Eskimo Village housed one hundred performers, many of which were

[56] As Manish Chalana explains, the term "pay streak" was used by miners in reference to "a line of ore in the layer of sediment lying on the bedrock of a creek or river, where the richest deposits are usually concentrated." The use of this term for the amusement portion of the AYP reflects the emphasis given to Alaska's mineral wealth, which the fair showcased (24).

professionals with years of experience at various world's fairs and other exhibits. Esther Eneutseak, "the most famous Eskimo in the world," according to one reporter, was one of them.

Born in Labrador, Eneutseak first came to the United States in 1892 when, at the age of 15, she traveled to Chicago to perform in the Eskimo Village at the World's Columbian Exposition. For much of her life, Eneutseak would continue performing and organizing shows throughout the United States and Europe. Her fluency in English made her an ideal interpreter, and by 1909 Eneutseak was known not simply as a performer but also as "a lecturer and demonstrator before universities, museums of natural history and various societies" as well as a "friend and interpreter for almost every explorer who…attempted to reach the pole" ("Eskimo Glad American Won" 1). When arctic explorer Frederick Cook claimed to have successfully reached the North Pole in 1909, Eneutseak was working in the Eskimo Village at the AYP. Upon learning of Cook's claim, Eneutseak celebrated publicly, pasting the *New York Times* report on the wall of the exhibit for fairgoers to see. "Thank goodness, an American has reached the pole first," Eneutseak told the *Seattle Daily Times*.

> We have been keen, we Eskimos, to realize this as other peoples of the world, but we have never been given credit for more than showing the dull interest that naturally goes with the payment of money for our services…Of course, it is natural that we wanted an American to be first, because we are all Americans, but we have seen explorer after explorer return and heard him say, "I did this," or "I did that," but rarely give the Eskimos the credit that belonged to them for helping them do "this or that." (4)

In this statement, Eneutseak presents the Inuit investment in U.S. Arctic exploration as a kind of patriotism. In doing so, she aligns recognition of Inuit contributions to polar exploration with

recognition of their belonging in an imagined community of "Americans." Moreover, by reveling in Cook's alleged success, Eneutseak was intentionally celebrating a specific kind of imperialism—one that embraced respectful collaboration with indigenous populations—while denouncing its more exploitive forms. "Eskimos are grateful to Dr. Frederick A. Cook for giving full credit to the men who accompanied him on his expedition," she explains. "There are many other explorers who have failed to express appreciation of the help the Eskimos have rendered them, notably Lieut. Robert E. Peary, whom the Eskimo detest and believe to be insincere in his efforts to reach the pole" (1).

Eneutseak goes on to remind Americans that Peary "took half a dozen of our people from Labrador to New York twelve years ago and abandoned them to their fate, after having installed them in an art school for scientific purposes" (4). Here, Eneutseak refers to an incident from the fall of 1897, when, at the behest of anthropologist Franz Boaz, Peary sent six Inuit—five more than Boaz had requested—to New York City to be studied by the scientists at the American Museum of Natural History. Peary also intended to exhibit the "Eskimos before audiences as a means of securing funds for the continuation of his explorations" (Harper 26). The day after their arrival in New York, twenty-thousand people flocked to the harbor, purchasing tickets to secure a glimpse of "the Natives who, despite the stifling heat, were dressed in the elaborate furs expected by curiosity seekers." In the months that followed, the Inuit were housed in the basement of the Museum of Natural History as a live exhibit, where "throngs of eager visitors…crowded around a ceiling grate installed above their living quarters" (Huhndorf, *Going Native*, 79). By May of the following year, four of the six Inuit were dead, having succumbed to southern illnesses for which they lacked immunity. The event generated considerable bad press for the Museum of Natural History.

Peary himself remained silent, hoping to avoid his share of culpability. Kenn Harper notes that in later years Peary actively sought to "falsif[y] the record" in his expedition narratives, discussing the Inuit in question "as if they were still alive, living healthily in Greenland, patiently awaiting his return" (42). He certainly never acknowledged their fate or his responsibility for it. Had he done so, Peary would have run the risk of alienating both his readership and the community of donors that funded his expeditions. As Michael Robinson explains, the U.S. public gauged the credibility of polar explorers by evaluating their character. Because the polar regions "offered little in the way of unique objects or geography that could be used to confirm explorers' accounts," they typically returned home without any indisputable evidence of their accomplishments. "As a result, the press and the public gave greater scrutiny to the ways" that explorers "comported themselves at home, searching for truthfulness in their actions, temperament, and demeanor" (134). By publicly recalling an embarrassing incident from Peary's past, one that threatened to tarnish his image as a heroic explorer, Eneutseak leveraged her status as an object of white fascination—and the platform which the AYP provided her—to undermine the image of benevolent white supremacy which Peary curated and relied upon.

Eneutseak's daughter, popularly known as "Miss Columbia," did much the same. Having been born at the World's Columbian Exposition, Columbia was a seasoned Eskimo performer by the age of 16. She became one of the highlights of the AYP, eventually winning the title "Queen of the Pay Streak" in a beauty contest organized by fair officials. As Josh Reid observes, her landslide victory over Maud Thomas, "a Seattle girl who personified white American standards of beauty and values," provoked "controversy along racial lines," as Thomas's supporters "found it difficult to accept that an indigenous woman had triumphed over" her in such decisive fashion.

Reporters, however, like fairgoers in general, were enamored with Columbia. "Columbia isn't anything if she isn't attractive," noted an article in the *Seattle Star*. "[S]he is wholly feminine, and her Eskimo trappings but add novelty to her other charms…Dressed in her caribou parka, her seal skin trousers and her beaded mukluks, she presents a picture that is not soon forgotten" (Wheeler 4). Indeed, after the AYP closed, Columbia's enduring fame allowed her family the opportunity to open an independent Eskimo Village exhibit in Ocean Park, California (Reid 122).

Columbia also had a successful career as a film actress,[57] even writing and starring in a film entitled "The Way of the Eskimo." As a 1911 review in *The Moving Picture World* notes, this "markedly educational" film tells the story of an "Eskimo youth" who saves the life of a white trapper on the brink of hypothermia. The white man subsequently seduces the Eskimo's fiancé, played by Columbia, only to abandon her shortly afterward. She is later saved from an attempted suicide by the Eskimo youth, who takes "her to his home as his wife after the tribal medicine man has anointed her with sacred oil and chased away the evil spirit" afflicting her. The review concludes by observing that the "backgrounds are the ice fields and ice huts. Many Eskimo habits and customs and ways of living are shown as incidents in the story. It is very commendable" ("'The Way of the Eskimo' (Selig)" 210). By appealing to white interest in Arctic environments and Eskimo culture, Columbia was able to create a film that foregrounds white men's abuse of indigenous women. By couching its indictment of white exploitation within a purportedly "authentic" representation of Eskimo life, "The Way of the Eskimo" sold white audiences a narrative that undermined assumptions of white supremacy and moral superiority.

[57] Though less prominent than Columbia, Esther Eneutseak also played small roles in a number of films during the first two decades of the twentieth century. For a detailed account of both women's careers, see Harper and Potter, "Early Arctic Films of Nancy Columbia and Esther Eneutseak."

The Hindered Hand

Considering the immense popularity of living ethnological exhibits in the first decade of the twentieth century, it comes as little surprise that, in 1905, African American writer and activist Sutton Griggs had Eskimos on his mind. At a time when U.S. culture was saturated with spectacles of racial performance and imperial theater, fiction provided a medium through which African Americans could manipulate the categories of white-supremacist racial discourse. But Griggs's novel *The Hindered Hand* contains no Eskimo characters. Instead, Griggs presents an odd sequence in which a mixed-race character, one Mr. Seabright, escapes a lynch mob by fleeing to the Arctic with the expressed intention of passing as an Eskimo. In this brief passage, as Seabright runs for his life, he whispers to the heavens,

> In case, O stars, any inquiry is made of you as to my whereabouts, please let it be known, of course without specifying the exact spot, that I have gone to the land of the Eskimo. My face will soon be overgrown with a beard which I shall so dye that the keenest scented mob in all the world can not discern any difference between my humble self and the anatomy of the regulation Eskimo. (181)

With this utterance, Seabright disappears from the novel, never to be heard from again. Despite the fact that the plot of *The Hindered Hand* hinges on Arabelle Seabright's scheme to undermine the social and political structures of white supremacy through the widespread passing of mixed-race families, critics have yet to address this scene in which her husband engages in a highly unusual act of racial passing. Beyond removing Seabright from the story, this moment has no bearing on the rest of the novel, and no rationale is ever provided as to why he sets his course for

the Arctic. It seems as if Griggs includes this passage for no other reason than to invite a comparison between Seabright and the Inuit.[58]

On one hand, it is possible to read Seabright's decision to impersonate an Eskimo in a very negative light. After all, this moment occurs shortly after Arabelle Seabright's suicide, a development which seems to suggest that Griggs has ruled out the possibility that racial passing can provide an effective means of advancing the collective interests of African Americans. Furthermore, one might argue that, steeped in the racial pseudoscience of the day, Griggs's decision to have Mr. Seabright pass as an Eskimo is intended as a picture of racial degeneration. As Finnie Coleman notes, Griggs "believed and argued that Africans—and by extension blacks in America—were in fact late arriving at the table of civilization and were by dint of time socially inferior to the more advanced civilizations of the earth, the most important being the Anglo-Saxon" (132). Since Griggs believed that contact with the Anglo-Saxon race hastened the development of the African American race, Seabright's decision to mimic a people widely perceived as "primitive" could be viewed as a picture of evolutionary regression, an acceptance of one's place in the ethnological exhibits on the Midway rather than in the stately halls of U.S. citizenship.

And yet, while the text certainly raises this possibility, the passage in question is more complicated than it may initially appear. As Molly Crumpton Winter observes, in Griggs's novels passing is rarely a mere means of escaping racial oppression. Rather, passing functions as "a metaphor of the false boundaries of the existing world," one that "points to the malleability of

[58] It is clear from this passage alone that Griggs had little real knowledge of the Inuit: Seabright's plan to blend in with them by hiding his face behind "an overgrown beard," reveals an ignorance of the fact that, historically, the Inuit have not worn beards. While small mustaches and goatees were not uncommon, any significant amount of facial hair would freeze and collect icicles in the Arctic climate. Moreover, as one Inupiat man told the *Chicago Tribune* in 2007, "We are direct descendants of the Mongols. We don't have facial hair" (Mastony). Thus, rather than allowing one to pass for an Inuk, a beard that covers one's face would be more likely to expose one as a cultural—and perhaps genetic—outsider.

identity, race, and society." Winter goes on to assert that the "various ways that people pass in Griggs's novels seems to indicate that in a world in flux, anything can change, anything can happen." With this in mind, Seabright's Eskimo passing calls attention to the performative and ultimately unreliable nature of the racial categories structuring the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century. By forging a connection between the covert practice of racial passing and the public obsession with racial performance—specifically that of an ethnic identity that disrupts the binary logic of Jim Crow—Griggs highlights, in absurd fashion, "the false boundaries" imposed by segregation and white nationalism.

It is important to remember that Griggs's wrote *The Hindered Hand* as a direct response to Thomas Dixon's white-supremacist novel *The Leopards Spots* (1902), which portrays African Americans as hopelessly incapable of overcoming primitive instincts that render them unfit for national citizenship. Through inflammatory depictions of black rapists and violated white womanhood, Dixon sought to recast U.S. national identity in racial terms. Thus, when a white girl is assaulted by a black man in Dixon's novel, the white race "fuse[s] into a homogenous mass of love, sympathy, hate and revenge. The rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, the banker and the blacksmith, the great and the small, they were all one now" (372). This fusing of the white race, irrespective of social class and other internal distinctions, mirrors the nationalizing agenda of U.S. world's fairs. The fact that this process is initiated by an encounter with the "primitive," nonwhite "savage," further mimics the racist logic of the Midway, which sought to provide white Americans with a baseline against which they could measure their own racial progress. *The Leopard's Spots* thus stages a version of the attack on African American citizenship that Douglass saw unfolding in the Dahomey Village.

Dixon acknowledged this agenda in no uncertain terms. On August 19, 1905, his essay "Booker T. Washington and the Negro" appeared as the lead article in the *Saturday Evening Post*, arguing that "no amount of education of any kind, industrial, classical or religious, can make a Negro a white man or bridge the chasm of the centuries which separate him from the white man in the evolution of human civilization" (1). Throughout the article, Dixon berates African Americans, describing them as "half-child, half-animal" and ascribing to them "a racial record of four thousand years of incapacity." He ultimately argues that "the greatest calamity which could possibly befall this Republic would be the corruption of our national character by the assimilation of the Negro race" (2). John Cullen Gruesser and Hanna Wallinger note that it was likely "the appearance of this article in a major national publication" that "prompted Griggs to alter his novel so that the third and final printing" of *The Hindered Hand* includes an appendix in which Griggs speaks directly to Dixon's slanderous portrayal of African Americans (Griggs, *The Hindered Hand*, 234n102).

Titled "A Hindering Hand," Griggs's supplementary appendix brilliantly appropriates the language of Social Darwinism which Dixon used to present African American citizenship as a threat to the nation. Asking his reader to "[m]ark the essentially *barbarous* character of Mr. Dixon's method of warfare," Griggs cast Dixon himself as an embodiment of the degeneracy impeding national progress. (208). "To cut [the] chords of sympathy" between African Americans and Northern whites "and re-establish the old order of repulsion, based upon the primitive feeling of race hatred is the first item on Mr. Dixon's programme," writes Griggs. "The adopting of a course so patently barbaric stamps Mr. Dixon as a spiritual reversion to type, violently out of accord with the best tendencies of his time" (209). "The appearance of such a man" as Dixon, Griggs writes, "might incline one to think that the world is going backward

rather than forward" (223). By characterizing Dixon's agenda as a "primitive" and "barbaric" "reversion," Griggs redefines the trajectory of progress, rendering white nationalism the real threat to civilization. Cleary, Griggs's acceptance of certain pseudo-scientific racial theories did not prevent him from dismantling Dixon's agenda and its rhetorical strategies.

Moreover, Griggs's novels often show the white-supremacist fixation with racial science ironically enabling black characters to evade the intellectual and literal grasp of white America. Seabright's declaration that "the keenest scented mob in all the world" will be unable to distinguish his newly-disguised form from "the anatomy of the regulation Eskimo" conflates the highly unscientific policing of the color line with anatomical observation, implying that despite their obsession with racial comparisons and measurements, white supremacists remain incapable of identifying that which is right in front of them. This reference to anatomy recalls another bizarre moment of racial passing from Griggs's oeuvre, in which Belton Piedmont, protagonist of *Imperium in Imperio* (1899), successfully passes for a corpse, even as he is partially dissected on an operating table. Having fortuitously survived a lynching, Belton's unconscious body—"to all appearances dead"—is delivered to the home of Dr. Zackland, who has been perversely eager to dissect Belton since first laying eyes on him (155). Upon their initial meeting, Zackland had been engrossed by Belton's "fine specimen of physical manhood," his "well formed" and "well proportioned" limbs and "manly appearance." Even then "the doctor's eyes followed" Belton "cadaverously" (145). While this description signifies, on one hand, the internal deadness and corruption of Zackland himself, its expression in Zackland's gaze suggests a characteristic of the way he views Belton. In a nearly literal sense, Zackland is unable to see Belton as anything other than sheer anatomy. As a result, even after Belton regains consciousness, Zackland can only see

a cadaver, a fact which allows Belton to escape, leaving behind Zackland's corpse in his place on the operating table.

In both of these examples, white fascination with the nonwhite body—mediated by discourses of racial anatomy—becomes a way of misrecognizing it. Rather than extrapolating supposedly innate racial characteristics from the physical attributes of the body, racial science misinterprets a calculated performance as a fixed condition. Griggs seems to suggest that if African Americans appear primitive to white Americans, this is not a product of racial instinct or evolution, as Dixon and others would have them believe. Instead, Seabright's Eskimo passing reveals this to be a façade, strategically deployed in the face of racial oppression and violence. At a time when African-American success was often met with harsh punishment, Griggs asks his reader to contemplate the varied performances which black Americans enact in response to Jim Crow.

A Negro Explorer at the North Pole

The same year that Griggs published *The Hindered Hand*, African American polar explorer Matthew Henson was returning to the Far North after a three-year hiatus. Born in Charles County, Maryland in 1866, Henson became a sailor at the age of twelve, when he secured a position as a cabin boy on a merchant ship departing from Baltimore. For the next five years, Henson traveled the world, developing many of the skills which he would later utilize in the Arctic.[59] After returning to the United States following the death of the ship's captain, Henson worked a variety of odd jobs for two years before meeting Robert Peary, who was preparing to embark on a trip to Nicaragua to survey routes for a proposed canal. Peary hired

[59] For more on Henson's early life, see B. Robinson, *Dark Companion*, Chapters 1–3.

Henson as his valet and soon learned that Henson's experience at sea made him a valuable asset. Henson would later accompany Peary on all of his Arctic expeditions from 1891 onward, including his final, allegedly successful North Pole expedition in 1909.[60]

In the period between 1902 and 1905, however, Henson worked as a Pullman porter for the Pennsylvania Railroad. At first, Henson primarily worked Midwestern routes, but he was later transferred to a Southern route which ran from Washington to Florida. According to his biographer, Henson's time in the South taught him "that ignorance and bigotry were a disease common to all southern states, and that prejudice and discrimination were dealt out democratically to all Negroes with equal violence and hatred." In addition to suffering the indignities of Jim Crow segregation, Henson once "witnessed…a fellow porter being mobbed, beaten and crippled, for no other reason than that the defenseless man was black and a group of frustrated whites were seeking a victim" (B. Robinson 175). Henson was himself the victim of multiple assaults which ranged from hurled oranges to shotgun blasts.

Unsurprisingly, by 1905 Henson was eager to return to Arctic exploration, a vocation that earned him the respect of his peers. By all accounts, Henson was an "Arctic expert." Explorer Donald B. MacMillan, who accompanied Henson and Peary on their final North Pole expedition, described Henson as having mastered every aspect of Arctic exploration: "A carpenter, he built the sledges; a mechanic, he made the alcohol stoves; an expert dog driver, he taught us to handle our dogs. Highly respected by the Eskimos, he was easily the most popular man on board ship." MacMillan contends that Henson was "of more real value to" Peary than the rest of the white crew combined. While all of the white explorers were sent back to the base camp before Peary's final dash to the Pole, "Henson went to the Pole with Peary," MacMillan observes, "because he

[60] For the duration of Henson's life, Robert Peary's 1909 expedition was generally regarded as the first successful North Pole expedition, though it has since been discredited.

was a better man than any one of us" (viii–ix). As such, Henson posed a unique threat to the white-supremacist logic of Arctic exploration.

In order to preserve this logic—and to ensure that he himself received total recognition for the success of the expedition—Peary's official narrative conflates Henson's Arctic expertise with that of the Inuit. "Henson was the best man I had with me for this kind of work," notes Peary, "with the exception of the Eskimos, who, with their racial inheritance of ice technic and their ability to handle sledges and dogs, were more necessary to me, as members of my own individual party, than any white man could have been. Of course they could not lead," Peary writes, "but they could follow and drive dogs better than any white man." He then notes that Henson was "almost as skilful [*sic*] at this work as an Eskimo," and that, like the Inuit, Henson "was a part of the traveling machine" in a way that the white explorers could never be (272). By reducing Henson to machinery, Peary denies him the agency—and thus the heroic potential—accorded to white explorers.

Peary then goes on to supply another reason for Henson's presence at the Pole, one that further undermines his status as Peary's equal: "While Henson was more useful to me than any other member of my expedition," writes Peary,

> he would not have been so competent as the white members of the expedition in getting himself and his party back to the land…While faithful to me, and when *with me* more effective in covering distance with a sledge than any of the others, he had not, as a racial inheritance, the daring and initiative of [the white explorers]. I owed it to him not to subject him to dangers and responsibilities which he was temperamentally unfit to face. (273)

This passage transforms Henson from a tool to a burden. According to this explanation, Henson remains with Peary all the way to the Pole not because Peary needs him but rather because Henson is incapable of making the journey back without Peary's guidance. Thus, like the Inuit, Henson is portrayed as incapable of operating without Peary's oversight on account of his "racial inheritance."

Henson was well aware of the implications of Peary's representational strategy as well as the conventions of imperial theater more broadly. Beginning in the late 1890s, Henson accompanied Peary on a series of cross-country lecture tours in order to raise money for future expeditions. While Peary lectured about polar exploration, Henson—"[s]weltering in his full dress of Arctic furs, and holding a team of Eskimo dogs in close leash"—acted out the scenes described (B. Robinson 79). Henson "even toured the United States alone" performing "a play of Peary's creation titled *Under the Polar Star*" (Counter 60). These performances, which sought to recreate the dynamics of Arctic expedition narratives, formed part of the same constellation of entertainments as the living ethnological exhibits and minstrel shows that consistently attracted large audiences across the nation. As a result, these shows would have undoubtedly reminded audiences of the Eskimo Villages popularized by the World's Columbian Exposition and subsequent world's fairs. Moreover, the image of a black Arctic explorer might initially have evoked in white audiences the typical minstrel show conceit in which the blackface performer poorly mimics white behavior as a means of comically exposing the purported gulf between the races. However, these performances, especially those conducted in Peary's absence, would have ultimately allowed Henson the opportunity to publicly demonstrate his skill as an Arctic explorer, thereby reminding white audiences of his authority on the subject.

Henson's 1912 memoir *A Negro Explorer at the North Pole* exhibits a profound awareness of the performative dimension of Arctic exploration as well as the dangers and opportunities it posed for a black man. As critics have shown, *A Negro Explorer* constitutes a sophisticated engagement with the tropes and conventions of both the Arctic expedition narrative and the African American autobiographical tradition. Writing at the convergence of these genres—and their contradictory logics—Henson occupied what Houston A. Baker might describe as a "tight place," a condition "constituted by the necessity to articulate from a position that combines specters of abjection (slavery), multiple subjects and signifiers…, representational obligations of race in America (to speak Negro), and patent sex and gender implications" (15). Tight places manifest "the always ambivalent cultural compromises of occupancy and vacancy, differently effected by contexts of situations" (69). Baker's paradigmatic example of this positionality is that of Booker T. Washington, whose "white masquerade" made him "one of white America's best champions of infinite *deferral*…of black citizenship and southern public sphere rights for the black masses" (64).

Washington was eager to co-opt Henson's narrative, even contributing an introduction to the memoir which frames Henson as an example of the racial uplift ideology for which he himself had become famous. According to Washington, Henson's "place of honor" as a discoverer of the North Pole was a result of his "twenty-three years of faithful service" through which "he had made himself indispensable" to Peary. "In extremity, when both the danger and the difficulty were greatest, the Commander wanted by his side the man upon whose skill and loyalty he could put the most absolute dependence and when that man turned out to be black instead of white, the Commander was not only willing to accept the service but was at the same time generous enough to acknowledge it" (xvi). Yet despite Washington's assurance that

"courage, fidelity, and ability are honored and rewarded under a black skin as well as under a white," *A Negro Explorer* actually tells a different story. As Anthony S. Foy has argued, the climax of Henson's memoir "demonstrates how uplift discourses of work, merit, and masculine recognition inadequately resolve the complex tangle of race and citizenship that marked Jim Crow America" (21). Though Henson initially "attempts to depict the North Pole as a frontier where work, rather than race, determines the black explorer's worth," his memoir ultimately "hinges on a crisis of recognition that challenges the premises of Washingtonian uplift" which the text superficially espouses (28). *A Negro Explorer* thus stages a complex performance in which Henson comes to embody the tenets of Washington's uplift ideology only to demonstrate its futility when, at the end of the quest, Henson is nonetheless betrayed and excluded by white America.

Henson's critique is constrained, however, by the fact that Robert Peary reserved the right to deny any of his expedition employees the freedom to publish "memoirs or other accounts of their Arctic experiences without his approval" (Counter 73). By maintaining complete editorial control over all publications, Peary sought to ensure that nothing reached the public that could compromise his heroic image or his title as the discoverer of the North Pole. As we will see, Peary had good reason to be wary of Henson's memoir and its potential impact on his reputation. Henson knew that nothing which impugned Peary's character would ever make it to press, and, desperately needing the income which a successful memoir could provide, Henson had little choice but to construct a narrative that would flatter Peary. Anything resembling protest would certainly be vetoed. For this reason, Gary Totten explains, *A Negro Explorer* constitutes a "veiled critique of Peary" that subtly but insistently "challenge[s] dominant ideologies about African American experience and identity during the age of Jim Crow" (71, 75).

Indeed, Henson's memoir initially presents the Far North as a region where racial distinctions give way in the face of necessity. In this seemingly colorblind world, Henson depicts himself laboring almost incessantly, foregrounding both his work ethic and his contributions to the success of the expedition. "I have been up to my neck in work," writes Henson (23). "I have a steady job carpentering, also interpreting, barbering, tailoring, [and] dog-training" (37–8). When he is not busy building sleds, igloos, and "soldering tins of alcohol," he is out hunting, occasionally for weeks at a time (56). In the rare moments when Henson is not at work, he is reading "Dickens' 'Bleak House,' Kipling's 'Barrack Room Ballads,' and the poems of Thomas Hood; also a copy of the Holy Bible" as well as "Peary's books" on Arctic exploration (39). This reading list, along with multiple references to the works of William Shakespeare, establishes Henson as a representative of Euro-American civilization. In short, the picture of Henson that emerges is that of a determined, hard-working American, whose tastes and aspirations reaffirm white middle-class values. Henson "rarely mentions his blackness before the narrative reaches its climax," Foy observes, and when he does, "his references…are indirect, implicit, or ironic, suggesting a playful circumspection that accords with a Washingtonian ideology of colorblind merit" (28–9).

Like other Arctic explorers of the era, Henson professes to have undergone a temporary reversion to the primitive during his time in the Far North. However, unlike white explorers, who often detailed this process at length, Henson's description is brief and almost perfunctory in nature. In the opening chapter, he writes,

> I was to live with a people who, the scientists stated, represented the earliest form of human life, living in what is known as the Stone Age, and I was to revert to that stage of life by leaps and bounds, and to emerge from it by the same sudden

> means. Many and many a time, for periods covering more than twelve months, I have been to all intents an Esquimo, with Esquimos for companions, speaking their language, dressing in the same kind of clothes, living in the same kind of dens, eating the same food, enjoying their pleasures, and frequently sharing their griefs. (6–7)

Though Henson suggests that he effectively becomes one of the Inuit over the course of his time in the Arctic, his professed ability to revert to primitive life is matched by his equally crucial ability to readapt to civilization, thereby distinguishing himself from the Inuit in the same way as the white explorers who remained "white men at heart" even while living like Eskimos. Because association with the primitive had very different implications for black Americans, Henson spends much of his memoir accentuating his distance from the Inuit by repeatedly depicting them according to longstanding racial stereotypes. Totten notes that "[i]n asserting imperialist ideology through his representation of the Eskimos and his relationship to them, Henson resorts to a racial hierarchy similar to that which he himself would have contended" (64). Henson's portrayal of the Inuit as a race of unhygienic children, bestial in many ways but capable of self-improvement under his guidance, allows Henson to fashion himself as the benevolent colonizer, educating the Inuit in the ways of civilization.

Henson's paternal self-image is displayed most prominently through his temporary adoption of Kudlooktoo, an orphaned Inuk boy whom Henson attempts to civilize: "After this boy was washed and scrubbed by me, his long hair cut short, and his greasy, dirty clothes of skins and furs burned, a new suit made of odds and ends collected from different wardrobes on the ship made him a presentable Young American. I was proud of him," writes Henson, "and he of me. He learned to speak English and slept underneath my bunk" (8). In this passage, Henson

balances his own assimilation of Inuit cultural customs with his transformation of Kudlooktoo from savage native to "presentable Young American." As Foy explains, Henson enacts "his own uplift by civilizing the Native," and in doing so, establishes "his ethnographic expertise and his managerial authority over them" in order to occupy "a mediating position between the Inuit and Peary" (31). Henson's memoir even contains appendices offering ethnographical "Notes on the Esquimos" and a list of all 218 "Smith Sound Esquimos."

Henson's ability to operate as an agent of Euro-American civilization initially seems to suggest that the Arctic is a merit-based world, where, unlike the United States, race does not determine one's social identity or limit one's mobility. However, the social equality which Henson seemingly experiences throughout the majority of the text dissolves in the climactic moment when the men reach the Pole. This episode begins with the optimism that has characterized the memoir thus far. When Peary plants the U.S. flag at the Pole, Henson experiences a "thrill of patriotism," raising his "voice to cheer the starry emblem of [his] native land. The Esquimos gathered around and, taking the time from Commander Peary, three hearty cheers rang out on the still, frosty air" (133). However, this moment of interracial comradery does not last long. After Peary takes measurements to confirm their location, Henson approaches him:

> Feeling that the time had come, I ungloved my right hand and went forward to congratulate him on the success of our eighteen years of effort, but a gust of wind blew something into his eye, or else the burning pain caused by his prolonged look at the reflection of the limb of the sun forced him to turn aside; and with both hands covering his eyes, he gave us orders to not let him sleep for more than four hours[.] (135)

For the rest of their time together, Peary hardly acknowledged Henson's presence. After arriving back at their ship, the men were forced to wait nearly three weeks before returning to the United States, and "not once in all of that time did [Peary] speak a word to" Henson "about the North Pole or anything connected with it" (153).

A Negro Explorer offers no explanation for Peary's sudden change in behavior, but Henson gave a much more illuminating account to the *Boston American* in a 1910 article titled "Matt Henson Tells the Real Story of Peary's Trip to Pole." In this exposé, Henson reveals that "Peary intended to visit the Pole…accompanied only by his Esquimo" employees (146). The night before the last stretch of their journey, Peary secretly made plans to "leave [Henson] in camp the following morning and go off to the Pole by himself," thereby becoming the sole American to reach it. However, Peary's scheme was undermined by the fact that he had misjudged their location from the start. In reality, they had already crossed the Pole the day before. Peary underestimated the distance which they had already traversed, Henson explains, because he "had ridden on the sledges the greater part of the journey up, as he did upon the return." "I, who had walked, knew that we had made exceptional distances in [the previous] five days," writes Henson. "So did the Eskimos, for they also had walked. Lieutenant Peary was the only surprised man" (147).

As noted earlier, the success of an Arctic expedition ultimately mattered less to U.S. readers than the manner in which it was conducted. The image of Peary passively riding his way to and from the North Pole behind Henson and the Inuit, who made the journey on foot, seriously compromised Peary's heroic image, and the revelation of his betrayal of Henson threatened to besmirch his manly character, the primary means by which the public gauged the credibility of polar explorers in the first place. In short, Henson's allegations, if believed, could potentially

destroy Peary's career and legacy. Moreover, if Henson's account is true, Peary can no longer lay claim to the title of "first American to reach the Pole," as Henson would technically have beaten him to it. With this in mind, Peary's coldness toward Henson begins to make sense. "From the time we knew we were at the Pole Commander Peary scarcely spoke to me," writes Henson. "Probably he did not speak to me four times on the whole return journey to the ship. I thought this over and it grieved me much" (149).

Returning to *A Negro Explorer*, it becomes clear that Henson's narration was always heading toward this betrayal. In the end, Henson's attempt to earn a position of respect through ceaseless labor and subservience proves misguided. Despite the crucial role which Henson plays in the success of the expedition, Peary disregards him the moment his goal is within reach, suggesting, as Foy argues, that even at the North Pole Henson "cannot escape the hierarchical relations of power that reproduce the color line beyond the nation's borders on the Arctic frontier" (39). In light of this revelation, Totten even suggests that Henson's memoir recalls "prominent feature[s] of the slave narrative," including the lengthy descriptions of unrewarded labor and "the emotional distress that some authors experience in relation to indifferent or unkind treatment from masters or other individuals with whom they have built a bond" (55, 73). Rather than standing as a testament to the efficacy of Washingtonian uplift ideology, *A Negro Explorer* ultimately refutes the notion that skilled black labor and patience will be recognized and rewarded by white America.

Dark Companion

In 1947, twenty-seven years after Peary's death, Bradley Robinson published *Dark Companion*, a biography of Henson written with his cooperation. S. Allen Counter describes

Robinson as "the liberal son of a member of the Explorer's Club," the first professional organization to acknowledge Henson's contributions to the "discovery" of the North Pole. Robinson's biography brought Henson to the attention of the U.S. public "at a time when American racial attitudes were becoming more enlightened," notes Counter (75–6). Unlike *A Negro Explorer*, however, *Dark Companion* makes no mention of Peary's betrayal of Henson. Instead, it consistently depicts Peary's relationship with Henson as one of mutual "loyalty and trust" (53). "Peary did not hold" the "view[s] which the average white mind would associate with the Negro," writes Robinson. "That was one of the things about Peary that Matt admired and respected so deeply. He was the first man in Matt's" adult life, "who dissolved the color line into loyalty, trust and respect" (56). This description clearly contradicts Henson's earlier accounts of Peary's behavior at the Pole, signaling a very different textual agenda.

Throughout *Dark Companion*, Robinson portrays Henson and Peary as a model of interracial harmony. Their relationship comes to represent the ideal alternative to the segregated world of Jim Crow, and the Arctic becomes a space where white and black can work together without the divisive hierarchies that plagued the United States. In short, *Dark Companion* sustains the fantasy which Henson's memoir debunks. In the polar regions, Henson and Peary become "two human beings equal in the impartial eyes of nature…brothers united by a common desire to expand man's knowledge of the world." It is only after they have returned home from their final expedition that "[t]heir lives" are once again "divided into black and white" (250–1). Not only is Peary not condemned for abandoning Henson upon their return, Peary becomes a tragic figure in his own right when Frederick Cook, the real villain of Robinson's text, attempts to steal his hard-earned title as "discoverer of the North Pole."

Perhaps what it most interesting about *Dark Companion*, however, is its description of Henson's affinity with the Inuit. Though they "remain the northern primitive Other" in *A Negro Explorer* (Totten 65), in Robinson's account Henson's relationship with the Inuit is characterized by transracial identification from the outset. The first Inuk man that Henson encounters

> seized Matt's arm, and baring it, compared the color of his skin with the Negro's. Then he pointed at Matt and said, "Innuit…innuit," and Matt could tell from the pleased grin on the native's face that he had been mistaken for an Eskimo…every Eskimo Matt met in the Arctic did exactly the same thing…Matt considered it by no means a disgrace to be considered by the natives as one of their race. (62)

Later, when an Inuk from another tribe asks Henson if he is an Inuk, Henson even identifies himself as an "innuit from the land in the south" (143). According to Robinson, Henson derived "great comfort and contentment" from "taking part in the Eskimo's daily problems of living, of talking with them, of hunting and sharing their simple primitive luxuries." Accepted "as a strange, hybrid member of their race," Henson "grow[s] so close" to the Inuit that he "almost [becomes] one of them." By the end of his career in the Arctic, "he felt that if they had been his own people he could not have loved them and respected them more deeply" (155).

This account of Henson's relationship to the Inuit is supported by statements made to Danish explorer Peter Freuchen by an Inuk man named Ootah, who accompanied Henson and Peary on their final expedition and knew Henson well:

> Mahri-Pahluk [Henson] was the only man from [Peary's] land who could learn to talk our language without using his tongue like a baby…Mahri-Pahluk could talk like a full-grown, intelligent person. Besides, Mahri-Pahluk showed all his days that he did not look down upon people from up here. Therefore, he wanted to

> learn our ways and he sure did. Nobody has ever driven dogs better than he has. And not only swing the whip…whenever the sled broke down, he could fix it like any of us. He could repair the harness or make new ones—and none has ever made a snowhouse [igloo] faster and better and bigger than him.
>
> But Mahri-Pahluk could also sing like us, dance like us, and his mouth was always full of stories none had heard before. (qtd. in Counter 70)[61]

In this effusive recollection, Ootah describes Henson as a fluent participant in the cultural life of the Inuit community, one who mastered not only the survival methods of the Inuit but also their social and artistic rituals. Ootah's statement suggests that while *Dark Companion* may not be a wholly reliable account of Henson's time in the Arctic, its portrayal of Henson's relationship to the Inuit is much more accurate than that of *A Negro Explorer*, which seeks to define Henson against them.

When read together, Henson's various accounts of his experience in the Far North tell a different story than any one in isolation. In this collective narrative, the Arctic becomes a realm that allows Henson to escape the poverty and racial violence he encountered in the Jim Crow United States. It allows him to assume a position of respect among his fellow explorers, and it provides him a community that welcomes him "as a strange, hybrid member of their race." The problems emerge when the representational dynamics of Arctic exploration begin to restructure the narrative. Peary's betrayal of Henson works not only in service of Peary's ego but also to fulfill the genre expectations of the Arctic expedition narrative. Likewise, Henson'sstereotypical portrayal of the Inuit—itself a betrayal, given the nature of their relationship as described by Ootah—is likewise motivated by Henson's knowledge of his readers' expectations and the

[61] Counter notes that as late as 1986 "Polar Eskimo elders" continued to "refer to Henson as 'Mahri-Pahluk,' meaning 'Matthew the Kind One,' a name given him by their forebears" a century earlier (4).

imperialist logics through which they will interpret his text. In short, the potential freedom which the polar regions offered Henson—and the potential solidarity he experienced with the Inuit—are ultimately foreclosed by the conventions of imperial theater.

CODA

TRUE NORTH

As Robert Levine observes, "alternative histories are always immanent in particular cultural moments." "[I]f we wish to look to the past as a way of fashioning a better future, we need to recover a sense of possibility (and provisionality and contingency) in the past that will help us to reconceive our own moment as a time of possibility (and provisionality and contingency)" (10-1). Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that the Alaska Purchase transformed the United States' relationship to the Arctic in ways that enabled Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to recognize, in varying degrees, the contingency of U.S. discourses of nation, region, gender, and race. However, in recent decades, as the effects of climate change have grown increasingly apparent, the Far North has become imbued with symbolic implications that transcend nation and geography. "Among the many ironies of the present era of climate change," writes Benjamin Morgan,

> is the fact that regions that had for centuries dramatized the fragility of human life have, in a few short decades, been refigured as representing the earth's profound vulnerability to collective human agency...[T]he story that the Arctic now tells us seems to have less to do with ideologies of the nation-state, and more to do with the ways in which extranational networks of humans and nonhumans distributed across the entire planet will be affected [by climate change].

Morgan ultimately suggests that "the Arctic has begun to do a very different kind of cultural work" that "may require" scholars to adopt "conceptual frameworks and vocabularies other than gender, nationalism, and imperialism" (3).

While the twenty-first-century Arctic undoubtedly poses conceptual and representational challenges, I would argue that languages of gender, nationalism, and imperialism still provide a crucial means of interpreting the transnational resonance of climate change. Hester Blum, for example, has recently argued that

> the visual forms emerging from the polar regions today—a polar bear clinging to vanishing ice, a blighted industrial drilling sight atop the permafrost—in some ways bear the metaphorical legacy of nineteenth-century racist stereotypes of the 'vanishing' Native, made pathetic, distant, and inevitable in his twilight. As such, the only narrative they provide is one of inevitability. (10)

Here Blum uses a nineteenth-century nationalist trope to articulate the ideological and affective dimensions of an extranational representational strategy. In doing so, she allows us to contemplate the intersections of national, racial, and environmental discourse in ways that can potentially illuminate both the contemporary environmental crisis and nineteenth-century settler colonialism. Rather than imagining the global scale of climate change as invalidating other scales of critique, we need to remain cognizant of the countless ways they are interconnected. National narratives of the Arctic become especially important for their ability to bridge these scales.

Although the story of Matthew Henson was long overshadowed by those of white explorers, in the twenty-first century Henson has become a topic of renewed interest both in the United States and beyond. In 2004, British filmmaker and photographer Isaac Julien debuted *True North*, an installation of film and photography loosely based on Henson's experience in the

Arctic. Julien's website describes *True North* as a "fragmented narrative" which "contemplates…ideas and histories of the hierarchical" through "a fascinating new visual reading of space and time and its relation to counter histories." To contest the "binaries which are present in many" accounts of Arctic exploration, *True North* replaces "order and stability" with "irrational meanderings, symbolic gestures from shamanistic tropes and the constant seeping inertia of the ice ("True North"). Indeed, the installation revels in a vision of the Arctic as perpetual flux. Images of ice are juxtaposed with scenes of running water, emphasizing the protean nature of the Arctic landscape and the endless cycles of melting and freezing that constantly reshape it.

Julien's most dramatic embrace of this aesthetic of transformation comes through his decision to cast a female fashion model as Henson's avatar. Though critics have been quick to analyze the implications of this substitution in terms of gender, race, nation, and historical memory,[62] they have largely neglected the fact that all of these registers take on added significance against a backdrop of melting ice. To ignore the ecological subtext of *True North* is, in a very real sense, to misinterpret its representation of all of these categories. Yet these categories are also what orient the narrative, allowing viewers to contemplate climate change in relation to discourses of imperialism and white supremacy. By merging national histories of race and gender with global ecological histories, *True North* invites us to rethink our narratives of both.

[62] See Bloom, "Arctic Spaces" and "True North"; Firstenberg, "Climbing the Racial Mountain"; Muñoz and Wang, "Reaching the Open."

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VITA

Ryan Charlton
Charlton.Ryan.M@gmail.com

Academic Employment

Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow, Department of English, Auburn University, (beginning August 2019)

Education

Ph.D., English, University of Mississippi (2019)

M.A., English, Auburn University (2012)

B.S., English, Troy University (2010), Magna Cum Laude

Fellowships and Awards

External Awards

Research Support Grant, Maine Women Writers Collection, Abplanalp Library, University of New England, 2018

Katharine Rodier Graduate Student Travel Award, MELUS: The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States, April 2017

Dorothy Foehr Huck Research Travel Award, Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Pennsylvania State University, Summer 2016

Travel Grant, Center for Transnational American Studies, University of Copenhagen, funded by U.S. embassy, April 2015

Institutional Awards

Non-Teaching Dissertation Fellowship (awarded to one PhD candidate per academic year), Department of English, U of Miss, 2018-19

Research Travel Grant, Department of English, U of Miss, 2018

Summer Writing Fellowship, Department of English, U of Miss, Summer 2017

Summer Research Assistantship, Graduate School, U of Miss, Summer 2017

Student Development Grant, Division of Student Affairs, U of Miss, April 2015

Publications

"'Our Ice-Islands': Images of Alaska in the Reconstruction Era," *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 10.1 (2019): web.

"There's No Escaping Oil, Even in the Wild Arctic" (solicited commentary essay), *Edge Effects*, March 5, 2019: http://edgeeffects.net/petromodernity-drilling-oil-arctic/

"Broadcast Radio in W. C. Handy's *Father of the Blues*," contribution to "Conversations about Place in American Culture: An International Network Discussion," *American Studies in Scandinavia* 48.2 (2016): 139-141.

Review Essays

"The Year in Conferences," forthcoming in *ESQ: A Journal of Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Culture* (co-authored).

"The Southern Writers, Southern Writing Graduate Conference." *Society for the Study of Southern Literature Newsletter* 50.1 (July 2016): web.

Book Review, *My Southern Home (Or, The South and Its People)* by William Wells Brown, ed. John Ernest. *Callaloo* 36.2 (2013): 461-463.

Selected Presentations

"'The cobweb shapes of the arctic town': Ghosts of Alaska in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*." C19: The Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists Biennial Conference. Albuquerque, NM. March 2018.

"Racial Passing and 'the anatomy of the regulation Eskimo' in Sutton Griggs's *The Hindered Hand*." Society for the Study of Southern Literature Biennial Conference. Austin, TX. February 2018.

"Reconstructing the Alaska Purchase." Society for the Study of Southern Literature Biennial Conference. Austin, TX. February 2018.

"'To all intents an Esquimo': The Inuit in Matthew Henson's *A Negro Explorer at the North Pole*." MELUS Annual Conference. Boston, MA. April 2017.

"Imagining 'Our Arctic Nation': Alaska and U.S. Fictions of Polar Utopia." Brown Bag Lecture Series, Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Pennsylvania State University. State College, PA. August 2016.

"'Our ice-islands grow smaller': The Arctic in Constance Fenimore Woolson's 'The South Devil.'" Society for the Study of Southern Literature Biennial Conference. Boston, MA. March 2016.

"'An expansionist at heart': Cuba and U.S. Imperialism in the Autobiography of W. C. Handy." Center for Transnational American Studies Biennial Symposium. University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark. April 2015.

"The Arrival of the American Blues: Nationalism and Racial Fantasy in the Autobiography of W. C. Handy." MELUS Annual Conference. Athens, GA. April 2015.

"Getting Mother's Blues: Race and Music in Suzan-Lori Parks' Revision of Faulkner." Faulkner and Hurston Conference. Center for Faulkner Studies. Southeast Missouri State University, Cape Girardeau, MO. October 2014.

"The Angels of Tims Creek: Religion and Sexuality in the Fiction of Randall Kenan." Society for the Study of Southern Literature Biennial Conference. Arlington, VA. March 2014.

"Locating William Wells Brown: Existential Mobility in *My Southern Home*." South Atlantic Modern Language Association Annual Conference. Durham, NC. November 2012

"Crossing the Black Atlantic: Paul Gilroy and Gary Younge." Pop Culture Association/American Culture Association Annual Conference. Boston, MA. April 2012

Teaching

University of Mississippi (2013-present)

Instructor of Record

- Writing 101: First-Year Writing (2015)
- Writing 102: First-Year Writing (2016, theme: environment)
- English 223: Survey of American Literature to the Civil War (2014)

Teaching Assistant

- English 222: Survey of World Literature since 1650 (2014, 2015 online)
- English 223: Survey of American Literature to the Civil War (2017, 2018)
- English 224: Survey of American Literature since the Civil War (2016)
- English 225: Survey of British Literature to the 18th Century (2014, 2017)
- English 226: Survey of British Literature since Romantic Period (2013, 2015)

Southern Union State Community College (2012-2013)

Instructor of Record

- English 101: English Composition I (2012)
- English 102: English Composition II (2012)
- English 272: World Literature II (2013)

Auburn University (2010-2012)

Instructor of Record

- English 1100: English Composition I (2011, two sections)
- English 1120: English Composition II (2012, theme: science and technology)

Teaching Assistant

- English 2240: British Literature after 1789 (2011)

Service

University of Mississippi

Chair, 2016 Southern Writers/Southern Writing Graduate Conference

Research Assistant to Professor Ben McClelland, 2016

Coordinator, English Graduate Student Body, 2015-16

Assistant Chair, 2015 Southern Writers/Southern Writing Graduate Conference

Docent at Rowan Oak (historic home of William Faulkner), 2014-present

Auburn University

Research Assistant to Associate Professor Emily Friedman**,** 2011

Editorial Assistant to Peter Campion, Editor-in-Chief of *Literary Imagination,* Oxford University Press, 2010

References

Leigh Anne Duck, Associate Professor of English (University of Mississippi). lduck@olemiss.edu

Kathryn McKee, McMullan Associate Professor of Southern Studies and English (University of Mississippi). kmckee@olemiss.edu

Adam Gussow, Professor of English and Southern Studies (University of Mississippi). agussow@olemiss.edu