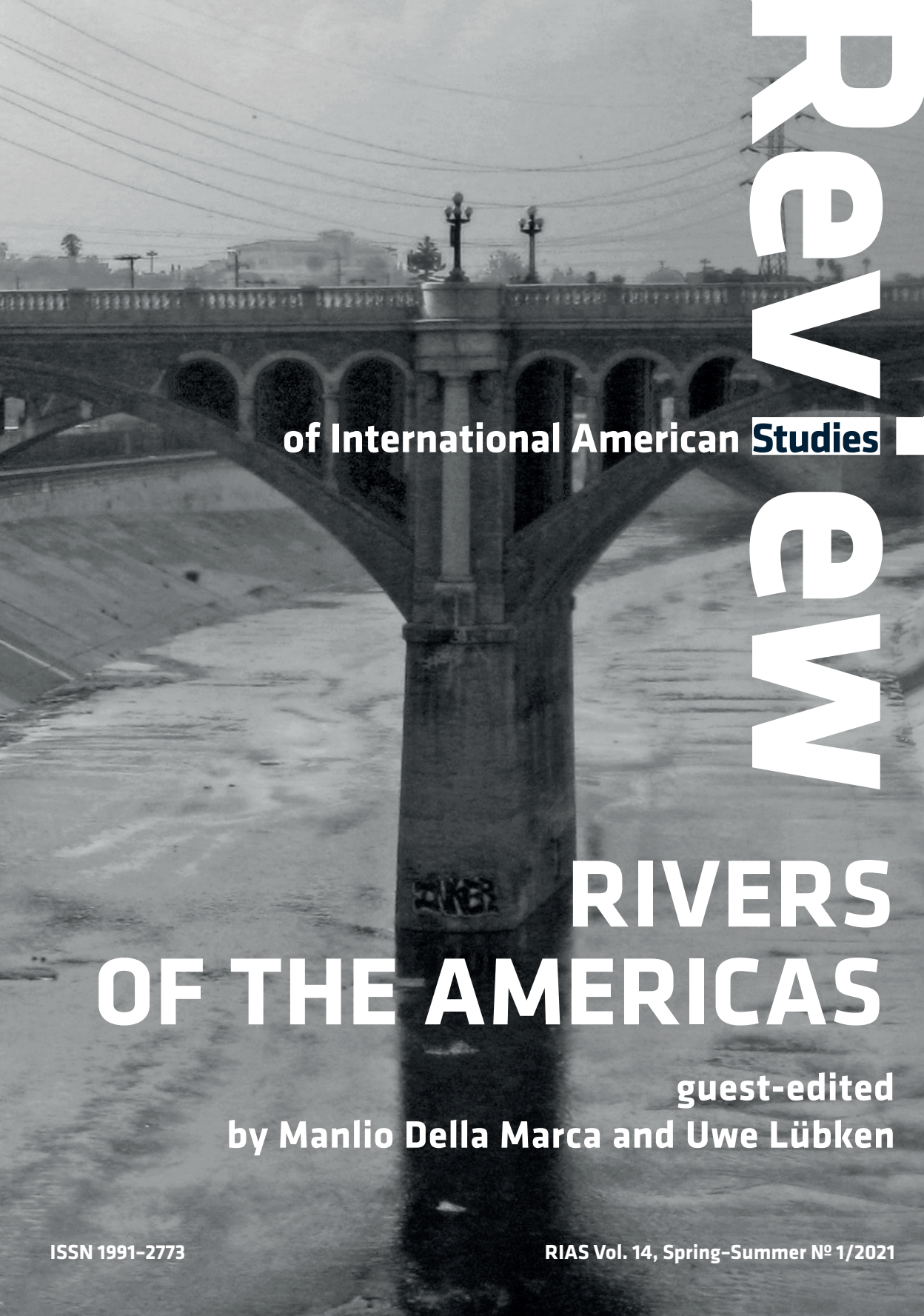

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guest-edited
by Manlio Della Marca and Uwe Lübken

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INHABITING THE RIVER

Musings on Boulevards and Arteries

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When Herman Melville wrote "A Thought on Book-Binding," his brief review of a revised edition of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Red Rover,* he resorted to a truly maverick strategy of praise. Instead of elaborating on the contents of the already famous novel, he concentrated solely upon the elegant binding of Putnam's 1850 edition, which gave him an opportunity to share the following reflection with his readers:[1]

> Books, gentlemen, are a species of men, and introduced to them you circulate in the "very best society" that this world can furnish, without the intolerable infliction of "dressing" to go into it. In your shabbiest coat and cosiest slippers you may socially chat even with the fastidious Earl of Chesterfield, and lounging under a tree enjoy the divinest intimacy with my late lord of Verulam. Men, then, that they are—living, without vulgarly breathing—never speaking unless spoken to—books should be appropriately apparelled. Their bindings should indicate and distinguish their various characters. A crowd of illustrations press upon us, but we must dismiss them at present with the simple expression of the hope that our suggestion may not entirely be thrown away. (Melville 1984: 1152–1153).

1. The review was first published in *The Literary World*, VI, Number 163 (March 16, 1850), 276–277. The text was brought to critical attention by John Howard Birss in 1932 (Birss 1932:346–348) and since then has been reprinted in many editions of Herman Melville's works, such as the Library of America—Literary Classics of the United States edition of 1984 (Melville 1984: 1152–1154).

The "very best society" of the academe, indeed, does not require any particular "dress code" from the books; we are delighted at the fact that they afford us the "divinest intimacy," irrespective of the nature of the text. Yet, should the book be "appropriately apparelled," it will grant the reader guidance before he or she even opens it—the cover art, to a sensitive eye, serves as a preface, and may be a magnet far more efficient than the most enthusiastic blurb. Such is the case with two recent collections of essays edited by Mariusz Jochemczyk and Miłosz Piotrowiak: *Urzeczenie. Locje literatury i wyobraźni* (2013) and *Wiersz-rzeka* (2016), both published by the University of Silesia Press in Katowice, Poland. Even before I attempt to explain the untranslatable wordplay in the Polish titles, the images on the covers bring to mind the well-known adage: a picture is worth more than a thousand words:

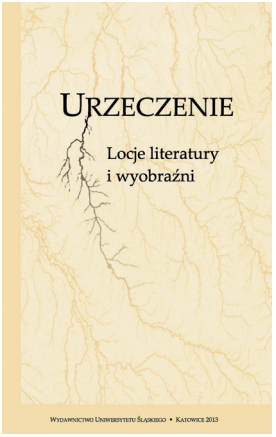

Fig. 1. "Urzeczenie," cover art by Paulina Dubiel. Image: courtesy of the artist.

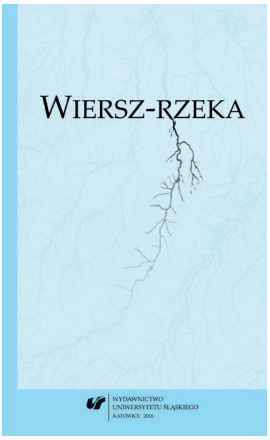

Fig. 2. "Wiersz-rzeka," cover art by Paulina Dubiel. Image: courtesy of the artist.

Both artistically re-imagined, reversed river charts, devoid of any information save the most obvious, introduce both books as "maps of connections," intellectual watersheds, or—more specifically—as two significant fragments of it: two rivers with their own tributaries, which somewhere, beyond the frames of the covers, must inevitably contribute to other major rivers and, ultimately, end in oceanic estuaries. Intriguing, each of the covers activates a semiotic interaction between the image and the title. The Polish noun "urzeczenie" literally means "captivation," "entrancement," "enthrallment," or "beguilement" by the beauty of speech. Simul-

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taneously, the near-homophony of the obsolete Polish noun "rzecz" ("speech," "oration") and the noun "rzeka" (river) allows one to understand the title in terms of language spellbound by the river—or, more broadly, in terms of river-inspired literature. The subtitle of the book, *Locje literatury i wyobraźni* makes this connection even more obvious, as it translates directly into: *The Pilot Books of Literature and Imagination*. Importantly, the nautical term "pilot"—referring to a book containing meticulous descriptions of the waters upon which one sails, the characteristics of the shores, the traits of the riverbeds and sea-bottom, the warnings concerning dangerous shoals and rocks, as well as observation and experience-based sailing, anchoring, and docking directions—metaphorically combines the idea of prescriptiveness with the concept of the ever-changing reality. Pilot books must be constantly updated lest a trusting, naïve, navigator should run his or her ship aground, following obsolete advise—and so do interpretations. Equally suggestive is the title of the second book—*Wiersz-rzeka*, which could be translated as *The River-Poem*. It plays upon the Polish phrase "wywiad-rzeka," an "extended" or "long" interview, in which context the eponymous poem reveals its nature as 'one that flows,' contributes to other poems, and is itself a tributary to a global song which combines all into one, endlessly replenishing the ocean of human reflection. At the same time, it also becomes tantamount to the river itself: the river-as-a-poem, overflowing the bounds of language.

Such a reading of the two covers leads to a series of more profound questions: How do the different values—whether discursive or non-discursive—carried by the rivulets, streams, and rivers across vast bodies of land contribute to a living, global, axiological repository? How do they interact? How do their dynamics impact the evolution of physical reality? How do they shape relational epistemologies? The understanding of the mutual interdependency between Self and World?

Rivers, like bloodstreams, feed or poison the bodies of land, carrying both nutrients and pathogens. When they are too strictly regulated, the seemingly "docile" rivers often rupture levees and flood-banks, and much like ruptured blood vessels, wreak havoc. And although the analogy may, at first, seem somewhat risky, it stands to reason to argue that the circulation of liquids

within an individual organism, whose 'body wall' is always incontinent, discontinuous, and penetrable, should be perceived as a part of the same system of which the rivers are an element as well:

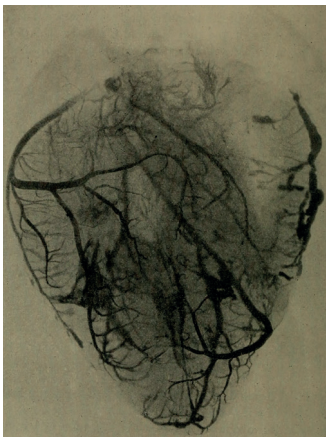

Fig. 3. "The Röntgen rays in medical work," David Walsh, 1899. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 4. "A Butterbur Leaf." Source: https://pixabay.com/photos/butterbur-leaf-leaf-veins-green-3469942.

Fractal geometry? Perhaps, perhaps not. Importantly, however, the intricate network of tributaries visible in the angiographic image of the heart and in the complex innervation of the leaf blade scrutinized under a magnifying glass both manifest the traits of the same, river-basin-like, morphology. Should these two pictures have been incorporated into the cover art of the two books instead of the river charts, the outcome would not contradict the books' titles—the similarity would be striking. Therefore, even if we choose to forgo further arrays into the Transcendentalist ecosophy in which "every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you,"[2] we still may recognize the power of the metaphor allowing us to intellectually and emotionally relate to Robert Charlebois's idea of "inhabiting the river," beautifully expressed in his song "Saint-Laurent" from his 1992 album *Immensément*:

J'habite un fleuve en Haute-Amérique
Presque océan, presque Atlantique
Un fleuve bleu vert et Saint-Laurent
J'habite un grand boulevard mouvant

2. The famous passage comes from Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself*, https://poets.org/poem/song-myself-1-i-celebrate-myself (accessed 1 May 2021).

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Une mer du Nord en cristaux de sel
Agile, fragile, belle et rebelle
Presque océan, presque Atlantique
J'habite un fleuve en Haute-Amérique (Charlebois 1992)

"Almost the ocean, almost the Atlantic," in Charlebois's vision the Saint Lawrence is a blue-green boulevard in constant motion. Rather than living *on the river*, the lyrical I lives *in it*, in the midst of the bustle of the living promenade. His element—beautiful, rebellious, and shared with other (non-human) subjectivities—teems with life:

Un fleuve tout plein d'animaux brillants
De capelans, de caps diamants
De baleines douces et de poissons-volants
J'habite un estuaire souffrant (Charlebois 1992)

And yet, its beauty notwithstanding, and irrespective of the immense complexity of its rich life, the Saint Lawrence—the old giant—suffers, unable to protect itself against the ignorance of those deaf to arguments proving its importance:

Un vieux géant à court d'arguments
Il faut vacciner même les marsouins
Débarbouiller bébé loup-phoque
Des Grands Lacs jusqu à Tadoussac
Il faut laver l'eau, laver l'eau, laver l'eau (Charlebois 1992)

If "even the porpoise" need to be vaccinated and if baby seals need cleaning up, it is obvious that now it is water–the *sine-qua-non* condition of life, which has been treated as the abundant medium of purification for ages—that must be "washed" itself. From the Great Lakes to Tadoussac, throughout the land, water in all tributaries must be *purified*, or else the grand boulevard, inhabited by so many, will die along with the land it nourishes:

Un fleuve par devers Charlevoix
Bordé de quais, de fermes d'oncles Joseph
De noms qui chouennent chez les Cajuns
J'habite une suite de caps tourmentés (Charlebois 1992)

The river, as troubled as American history, once a highway to sailing ships and an inanimate (albeit always moving) treasury of goods—receives the face of the old giant—and thus, literally, becomes a *subject*. In Charlebois's song, the Saint Lawrence is a living organism made up of many; it is inseparable from the selves who today might still deem it only ancillary. Life, which the river has been warranting to countless humans, men and women who once felt their organic connection to its vibrant flow, must be celebrated in a gesture of a radical reconnection to the Old Giant, whose name may now be capitalized—not only *in memoriam* of those who are long gone, but also for the sake of the millions who, consciously or not, remain "moored to the tides":

A la mémoire des marins d'eau salée
Des voitures d'eau qui l'ont défrichée
Ils étaient des centaines puis des milliers
On es des millions amarrés aux marées (Charlebois 1992)

We are all "amarrés aux marées"—like the real characters of Félix Leclerc's "La Drave," Mark Twain's dwellers of the Mississippi, Melville's passengers of the "Fidèle," and many, many others, we belong in the river *sensu largo*. More and more perceptibly, the present day water-sovereignity protesters, international eco-activists, or *friluftsliv* fans become important voices in the public space. Awakened to the 'old' awareness, many Westerners have started practicing—and often teaching—the very profound connection that the Indigenous Nations have been *living* since the time immemorial.[3]

3. The transfer of knowledge, late as it is, has become possible owing to the fact that during the past decades Indigenous studies have gained their due recognition, but also because the West, facing an inevitable ecological crisis, has eventually become attentive to Indigenous methodologies, recognizing the importance of landmark First Nations' philosophies such as that of *Hishuk'ish tsawalk*—"all is one"—which became one of the first theoretical positions to practically impact the shape of Canadian legislature. One of the most important champions of Tsawalk, Dr. E. Richard Atleo, the hereditary Chief of the Nuu-chah-nulth Nation who vitally contributed to the establishment of the First Nations Studies Department at Malaspina University College (now Vancouver Island University), and who authored three books dedicated to the ontology drawn from Nuu-chah-nulth culture, made the implementation of some

Slowly, we re-learn to appreciate the importance of the non-human subjectivity of Oceanus, the Old Giant river engulfing the Earth, once a primordial deity in the Greek pantheon and the father of three thousand Potamoi, the ancient river gods. The "Ol' man river," who "don't say nothin', but "must know something'," [4] although himself "running out of arguments," speaks again: a simple JStor query produces an astounding result of 1,316,839 titles for the keyword "river"—and the river-inspired discourse "keeps on rollin' along." Globetrotters and poets, but also geologists, botanists, zoologists, climatologists, ethnologists, economists, engineers, chemists, political scientists, musicologists, philosophers, literary and cultural scholars alike—all turn their attention to the river: both a living artery and a principal agent of change. Although humankind has long realized that "no man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man," [5] it is only now that the whole plethora of existing currents and streams, no matter how small, gains recognition as a system of important tributaries to this ancient knowledge. This issue of the *Review of International American Studies* celebrates the old truth: *Panta rhei*.

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of the principles of Tsawalk in the area of sustainable forestry during his service as Board Member of the Centre for Environmental Resources, a Co-Chair of the Scientific Panel for Sustainable Forest Practices in Clayoquot Sound, and a member of the board of Ecotrust Canada. See Richard E. Atleo's biographical note available at the Simon Fraser University website: http://www.sfu.ca/ore/RichardAtleo.html (10 May 2021).

4. For scholars of the younger generation it might not be obvious that I am making a reference to a song composed by Jerome Kern and written by Oscar Hammerstein II featuring in the 1927 musical *The Boat Show*, which gained fame owing to the stellar performances of two bass singers: Bing Crosby (1928) and Paul Robertson (1936). See, for example, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eh9WayN7R-s (1 May 2021).

5. Scholars usually attribute this famous aphorism to Heraclitus of Ephesus (see, for example, Stern 1991).

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"DOWN BESIDE WHERE THE WATERS FLOW"

Reclaiming Rivers for American Studies (Introduction)

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Over the past three decades, rivers have become a fascinating and popular subject of scholarly interest, not only in the field of environmental history, where river histories have developed into a distinct subgenre (Schönach 2017; Evenden 2018), but also in the emerging field of environmental humanities. In this scholarship, rivers have often been reconceptualized as socio-natural sites where human and non-human actors interact with the natural world, generating complex legacies, path dependencies, and feedback loops (Winiwarter and Schmid 2008). Furthermore, rivers have been described as hybrid "organic machines," whose energy has been utilized by humans in many different ways, including the harvesting of both hydropower and salmon (White 1995). Indeed, as several environmental historians have noted, in many regions of the world, watercourses have been transformed by technology to such an extent that they increasingly resemble enviro-technical assemblages rather than natural waterways (Pritchard 2011). Rivers have also been discussed through the lens of "eco-biography," a term coined by Mark Cioc in his influential monograph on the Rhine River, a book informed by "the notion that a river is a biological entity—that it has a 'life' and 'a personality' and therefore a 'biography'" (2002: 5).

Quite surprisingly, despite this "river turn" (Evenden 2018: 700), rivers have played a marginal role in recent American Studies scholarship.[1] To address this gap, this issue of *RIAS* brings together scholars from different disciplines, countries, and continents to analyze a wide variety of river experiences, histories, and representations across the American hemisphere and beyond. Hence the title of this volume, *Rivers of the Americas*, should be seen as both an allusion to the *Rivers of America*[2] book series (a popular series of sixty-five volumes, each on a particular US river, published between 1937 and 1974) and as a reminder of the still untapped potential of hemispheric, transnational, and comparative modes of critical engagement with rivers in American Studies. Thus, this issue features articles on major and iconic rivers, such as the Mississippi and the Uruguay, as well as contributions on less well-known rivers like the Saint-Maurice River in Canada and the Sumpul River in El Salvador, along with a comparative discussion of the Mississippi and the Volga. While several of the authors in this special issue emphasize the transboundary and transnational elements of American rivers, they also constantly remind us of the intimate connection of rivers with local cultures, practices, and histories, for, as Heidegger put it, "the river is the locality of journeying. The river is the journeying of locality" (1996: 35).

The purpose of this introduction, then, is twofold: on the one hand, it attempts to map the articles gathered in this volume onto existing scholarship on rivers; on the other, it suggests some possible axes of intellectual and critical engagement along which to organize new conversations about waterways—conversations that in our intention should attempt to cross disciplinary, linguistic, national, and epistemological boundaries. Above all, the following pages are an invitation to other colleagues from around the globe to take a walk "down beside where the waters flow," as Joan Baez sang, to explore together the innumerable, intersecting ways in which thinking with and about rivers could contribute to the field of American Studies.

1. While submitting the final version of this article, we were pleased to read that the journal *Comparative American Studies* is going to publish a special issue on rivers, too.
2. See Mink (2006).

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The hydrology of large river systems—their systems of tributaries, canals, locks, and dams linking separate watersheds—has played a major role in sustaining communities and vast networks of commercial relations. In the Americas, large and small rivers were of crucial importance for Indigenous societies as a source of food and as paths of transportation (Wood 2018). In the absence of other reliable means of transportation, rivers also became the main and often only available pathways for the exploration, conquest, colonization, and settlement of the vast interior spaces of the Americas so that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, as Donald J. Pisani (2000: 468) has pointed out, it made "more sense to think of the United States […] as a series of rivers separated by land, than as a huge land mass punctuated by rivers."

With the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the United States and other countries in the second half of the nineteenth century, major rivers became infrastructural corridors that included not just the waterway itself but also the roads, railroad tracks, tunnels, bridges, warehouses, telegraph and telephone lines concentrated along their banks (Castonguay and Evenden 2012). At the same time, rivers also became an integral part of the urban metabolism of fast-growing cities (Heynen et al. 2006), providing drinking water and a sewer for city dwellers as well as an "ultimate sink" for industrial waste (Tarr 2006). Furthermore, by making use of "their" rivers, urban centers could draw upon a vast hinterland, sometimes artificially extended by the use of canals and aqueducts, tapping far away water sources (Steinberg 2002).

But as much as rivers connect and create opportunities, they also have a highly destructive potential. The very characteristics that make rivers so attractive for humans bear the seeds of destruction and, it could be argued, that our use of rivers has produced what German sociologist Ulrich Beck (1986) described, in a different context, as "risk societies." In particular, the flooding of rivers is a constant reminder of the precariousness and vulnerability of river life and river economies. In the history of the Americas, inundations have swept away entire settlements and human communities—both Indigenous and colonial. They have fundamentally altered the social composition of cities and caused the displacement

of many people who had settled along the riverbanks (Lübken 2019). While floods have created huge human and non-human suffering (Lübken 2010) and vast economic damages, droughts, too, though less deadly than extreme flood events, possess a tremendous disruptive potential. Until year-round river navigation could eventually be guaranteed by the construction of vast systems of locks and dams, droughts could interrupt river traffic and transportation for weeks or even months and therefore were dreaded in many parts of America. Steamboat traffic was especially vulnerable to snags, to trees floating in the river—often invisible—to sandbars, and to shifting riverbeds (Shallat 1994: 101). As T.S. McMillin points out in his contribution to this issue, which focuses on the "interrelations among rivers, steamboats, and literature," the advent of steamboats and steamboat travel transformed rivers in the nineteenth-century Unites States, allowing writers of the period to use the steamboat as a symbol of the tension between nature and culture.

It is important to understand that the disruptive qualities of rivers are the result of vulnerabilities embedded in human societies—often built up over long periods of time—and a certain autonomy of natural processes. Indeed, one of the most important aspects of recent scholarship on rivers and of several essays in this volume is the insight that rivers have not only been acted upon, but are also actors themselves (Mauch and Zeller 2008: 7). As much as rivers have been transformed by societies, they have also imposed their agency on human settlements, not just by floods and droughts or by hydro-morphological changes but also by their very rhythm, or rather lack of it. The unpredictability of rivers will always pose challenges to riverine societies. The construction of locks and dams, levees, floodwalls, and the constant dredging of riverbeds can all be seen as attempts to tame natural waterways and to find a "happy mean between low water and flood," as the New York Times put it in 1895. As a result of the efforts of engineers and planners, many rivers have been dramatically transformed—some to such an extent that they have come to resemble squalid concrete-lined canals, without any vegetation on their banks. Others, like the Cuyahoga River in Ohio, have been polluted to such a degree that they caught fire (Stradling

and Stradling 2008). While the reengineering of the Chicago River has even forced the river to flow backwards (Cronon 1991).

LOSS, CONSERVATION, RESTORATION

The severe environmental consequences of these human-induced transformations has not gone unnoticed, though. By the middle of the nineteenth century, nature writers like John J. Audubon and Henry David Thoreau in the United States started to complain about the loss of biodiversity along the riverbanks and denounced the environmental degradation created by the advance of settler society. Only a few years later, but at the southern end of the American continent, as Eunice Nodari and Marcos Gerhardt emphasize in their article on the socio-ecological history of the Uruguay river, the Brazilian engineer Francisco Rave would express his deep concern about the unsustainable harvesting of *yerba mate* along the shores of the Uruguay River. Perhaps it is also worth remembering here that one of the most famous conflicts in US environmental history, which in the early twentieth century pitted conservationists against preservationists, centred on a proposed dam cutting through a scenic valley in the Yosemite National Park. In the end, the Tuolumne River was dammed and the Hetch-Hetchy valley flooded, but the fight against this intervention left a lasting imprint on the North American environmental movement (Miller 2007).

It is only in the second half of the twentieth century, however, that ecological considerations began to percolate into legislation leading to real change with regard to the protection of rivers (Evenden 2004). Since then, rivers have been increasingly rediscovered, restored, and regenerated—a development facilitated by the deindustrialization and depopulation of many river landscapes (Knoll et al. 2017). Yet, just as the broader environmental movement of the postwar decades tended to ignore the interests and demands of minorities (Bullard 1990), rivers deemed worthy of protection were most often not those flowing through areas with large ethnic or minority populations.

As several of the articles in this issue attest, environmental protection, environmental (in)justice and environmental colonialism have been closely interrelated in the history of the Americas,

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and rivers are no exception. Thus, Stéphane Castonguay and Hubert Samson show in their contribution how, between 1850 and 1930, due to the steady expansion of Euro-Canadian society, the Atikamekw people lost large portions of their traditional hunting and fishing grounds in the valley of the St. Maurice River in Quebec. In particular, Castonguay and Samson examine how the St. Maurice watershed was not just materially transformed by dams and other hydrological interventions, but also symbolically appropriated by Euro-Canadians settlers, who produced maps and surveys that "erased" the presence of the Atikamekw.

Paul Formisano, in turn, takes us to the Colorado River Basin and discusses how Indigenous texts on the Colorado tend to emphasize the connections, rather than the differences, between nature and culture. He argues that Indigenous knowledge challenges mainstream water knowledge and emphasizes how in the Indigenous texts he examines the "concern for the land and water reflects a concern for the self, the home, community, and all relationships that unite the human with the nonhuman world." The "decolonization" of Colorado River basin water knowledge evoked by Formisano is a powerful reminder of the role that rivers have played and continue to play "as sites of colonial contestation" and resistance to various forms of oppression, including state-sponsored, neocolonial violence, a topic explored in this issue by Adrian Kane in his discussion of literary and filmic representations of Central American rivers. For Kane, in Central American literature and film of the civil war period, rivers are often portrayed as "deathscapes," places associated with death, trauma, and mourning.

The close interplay between environmental protection, environmental (in)justice, and environmental colonialism resurfaces in Christof Mauch's transatlantic conversation with Lawrence Buell included in this volume. Discussing how today some of the most "powerful and subversive" ideas to rescue endangered ecosystems around the globe come from Indigenous concepts, Mauch mentions how it is indeed the Indigenous concept of "derechos de la naturaleza" (rights of nature) that has recently been applied by an Ecuadorian Provincial Court to a river, which might be seen as indication of an increasing willingness to take a more holistic

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approach to river management. Buell, in turn, offers his thoughts on a wide range of topics, including a discussion of the role of rivers in the American environmental imagination and a critical reassessment of "Watershed Aesthetic," a chapter from his monograph *Writing for an Endangered World*, a book published twenty years ago but in many ways more relevant than ever.

FLUID BORDERS, WORKSCAPES, RIVERSCAPES

Rivers not only connect, they also separate. Throughout the Americas, rivers constitute official borders between counties, states, and nations. Rivers form parts of the northern and southern borders of the United States. Further south, the Uruguay River, as Nodari and Gerhardt mention, was "considered as the southern border between the colonial domains of Spain and Portugal in the Treaty of Madrid" of 1750 and today still serves as a "permeable" geographical and political border between Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay. In the past, as today, rivers also represent not so much the boundaries between political entities but lines of demarcation between oppression and opportunity.

For instance, in the first half of the nineteenth century, the Ohio River was not only a commercial artery of the trans-Appalachian West but also the boundary between slave and free states. For this reason, during the antebellum era and the Civil War, African Americans often referred to the Ohio as the "River Jordan" (Trotter 1998; Bigham 2005), the last obstacle in their passage from slavery to "the Canaan of liberty on the other side" (Stowe 1998: 57). In fact, the crossing of the Ohio River was one of the most important segments of the Underground Railroad, the interlinked system of routes, people, and hiding places that helped runaway slaves to leave the South. One of the most famous and dramatic crossings of the Ohio River, immortalized by Harriet Beecher Stowe in her 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, happened when the river was frozen, a rare occurrence in the early nineteenth century and more or less impossible today. Crossing the Ohio, however, did not necessarily mean the end of the fugitives' ordeal, especially after the US Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, which allowed slave owners to "reclaim" their property. At the same time, this river boundary, as many other river-borders around the globe,

was more permeable than it seemed to be at first glance because its function as an artery of commerce required not just many goods but also many people to cross the river daily, especially in port cities. Thus, as Christopher Phillips has recently pointed out, for many whites but also for some free blacks and sometimes even for slaves, "rather than form an absolute barrier that slavery could not penetrate, the rivers served as a collective confluence for both slavery and freedom" (2016: 21).

But rivers also represent a different kind of confluence, namely, that of work and nature. Loggers, farmers, fishers, steamboat pilots, boilermen, and all those working on the banks of rivers experience nature mainly through labor and work. Yet, as Richard White (1995; 1996) and other critics in the emerging field of environmental labor history have noted, environmentalism—especially in the US—has too often neglected the crucial nexus between work and nature. In her contribution to this issue, Dorothy Zeisler-Vrlasted draws from both White's insights and on the concept of "workscape," a term coined by Thomas Andrews in his *Killing for Coal* (2010). In doing so, she compares the subculture of both free and enslaved African Americans who worked on and along the Mississippi to that of another non-hegemonic group, the barge haulers on the Volga (see also Chabrowski 2015). One of the aspects of her discussion that will be of particular interest to the readers of *RIAS* is the comparative and transnational approach underlying her analysis.

A different type of 'scape' animates "The Chosen People: The Hudson River School and the Construction of American Identity," the chapter from Tricia Cusack's *Riverscapes and National Identities* that we have the privilege of reprinting in this volume thanks to the combined generosity and support of the author and Syracuse University Press. The question Cusack explores is a simple but crucial one: what role did riverscape imagery play in the formation of national identities in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe and North America? After reminding us that the use of rivers in service of nationalist ideologies was not US-specific but a transnational phenomenon, Cusack discusses how a national riverscape may be considered as "a visual text that forms part of a discourse in the Foucauldian sense; that is,

it actively constitutes national imaginings." Using this observation as a point of departure for her analysis, she moves on to examine some of the most celebrated paintings of the Hudson River School to unmask the "peculiar ideological character" of these national riverscapes.

A project like this would not have been possible without the personal, intellectual, and financial assistance of many others. We would like to thank the journal editors for allowing us to pursue the idea of publishing a special issue on a rather unorthodox topic. *RIAS* is, we are convinced, the ideal outlet for such a project due to its interdisciplinary and transnational character. We are also grateful to all the anonymous peer reviewers for their thorough yet constructive comments. LMU's Amerika-Institut, our academic home, has supported this special issue logistically and financially. Sarah Graewin's meticulous bibliographic research has been of great help to us. Finally, we are indebted to Nathaniel Racine for his editorial assistance and sensitive copyediting.

As we push this fragile paper canoe into the unpredictable waters of digital academic publishing, we hope that its intellectual cargo will reach many other scholars similarly interested in rivers the world over and inspire them to launch other vessels into the waters of this growing area of study.

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ATIKAMEKW AND EURO-CANADIAN TERRITORIALITIES AROUND THE SAINT-MAURICE RIVER (1850–1930)

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In the first decades of the twenty-first century, the inundated traditional territory of the Atikamekw people resurfaced twice, some ninety years after the construction of a reservoir dam on the Upper Saint-Maurice River in Quebec.[1] In 2007, erosion of the banks of the Gouin Reservoir exposed remains of the Kikendatch cemetery (Mercier 2007). Then, in 2016, the Specific Claims Tribunal of Canada[2] condemned the federal government of Canada for failing "to honour its legal, statutory and fiduciary duties" to the Atikamekw of Opitciwan (previously known as the Atikamekw of Kikendatch) when the provincial government of Quebec constructed the dam and impounded the reservoir between 1915 and 1918 (SCT).

For centuries, the Atikamekw had frequented the headwaters of the Saint-Maurice River in small nomadic hunting bands. Despite this millennial occupancy of the Saint-Maurice water-

1. We gratefully acknowledge the resourcefulness of Sylvie Létourneau at the Service documentaire du Conseil de la Nation Atikamekw (La Tuque) and Caroline Rouleau at the Hydro-Quebec Archives (Montreal) for their help in documenting this research. We also thank the guest editors, Manlio Della Marca and Uwe Lübken, as well as the anonymous reviewers, for their useful comments.

2. An independent adjudicative body appointed by the Canadian federal government in 2008, the Specific Claims Tribunal (SCT) aims to resolve, mainly but not exclusively, monetary disputes between a First Nation and the Crown (SCT 2020).

shed, the bones torn free by the waters of the reservoir were rare evidence of their ancestral presence in the area. The rapid industrialization of the river and its watershed during the first decades of the twentieth century had materially and symbolically transformed the living environment of the Atikamekw and concealed their markers of occupancy.

This article investigates the reconfiguration of the Atikamekw territoriality within the watershed of the Saint-Maurice River between 1850 and 1930. During that period, Euro-Canadians accentuated their presence in the traditional territory of the Atikamekw by building industrial infrastructure and exploiting natural resources, in particular hydropower and pulpwood. For the cultural geographer Claude Raffestin, territoriality is a set of complex relationships mediated by techniques and representation, and that unites a human group and its material and spatio-temporal environment (Raffestin 1986: 93).[3] Deterritorialization refers to the reorganization of these systems of relationships, as one replaces another (91). As the industrial reconfiguration of the river and its watershed impacted the social practices of the Atikamekw, it potentially constituted an act of deterritorialization. After reviewing the ethnohistorical and anthropological elements of the Atikamekw spatial practices, the article turns to the Atikamekw and Euro-Canadian territorialities and explores the differences in their geographic imaginations.

THE SOCIAL PRACTICES AND TERRITORIALITIES OF THE ATIKAMEKW

In the middle of the nineteenth century, more than two hundred Atikamekw inhabited the Upper-Mauricie (Gélinas 2003). Today more than seven thousand individuals are distributed in three communities—Opitciwan, Wemotaci and Manawan—which closely correspond to the territory of their traditional semi-nomadic bands (Poirier 2001: 143). Despite the fact that they share a com-

3. In his understanding of territoriality, political geographer Robert Sack insists on the strategic dimensions of spatial productions to exercise control over a given area (Sack 1986). On the complementarity between Raffestin and Sack, see Murphy (2012). Éthier and Poirier articulate a specific understanding of indigenous territorialities as it relates to the Atikamekw Nehirowisiwok of Upper-Mauricie (2018: 107).

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mon language and culture, rarely have these three communities expressed the need for a unique political representation. In fact, the ethnonym Atikamekw Sipi gained currency late in the twentieth century, and even within the Atikamekw Nation Council, each community remained largely autonomous (Gélinas 2003: 187–188).

Nitaskinan, the traditional territory of the Atikamekw, covers the watershed of the Saint-Maurice River, where today they still find the resources that have long been central to their subsistence and commercial activities (Nehirowisiw Kitci Atisokan). At the headwaters of the Saint-Maurice River, the Atikamekw break into smaller groups to hunt large game animals and trap fur-bearing animals, a model of social organization that brings together members of the same family on delimited hunting grounds (Gélinas 2003: 152). Along with other natural markers such as lakes and mountains, the many tributaries of the Saint-Maurice river, which gave the river its name Tapiskwan Sipi (the river where several streams flow), are used to distribute the territory among the hunting groups (Coocoo 2015). Hunters also leave marks on the territory (notches on trees, for example) to delimit their area of activity and signal their presence. These markers of occupancy signify to other members of the community that the area is occupied, sometimes also indicating the number of beavers that the hunting group plans to collect (Poirier 2004: 140). Markers like these form part of the spatial distribution of the Atikamekw and the collective organization of their activities in the territory. Although they are flexible and do not prevent hunters from pursuing mobile prey across boundaries, on some level these markers regulate access to the territory. They convey a language understood and shared by all members of the community. This mode of spatial organization allows the Atikamekw to occupy the territory and exploit its resources, and to respect certain rules of life in society.

The spatial distribution of the Atikamekw also depends on seasonal cycles and the availability of resources across a given territory. The Atikamekw recognize the existence of six seasons (autumn, pre-winter, winter, pre-spring, spring, and summer), each corresponding to a particular state of the territory and a specific activity, whether it be fishing, big game hunting, trapping, or gathering

(Poirier 2004: 140). The cycle of the six seasons also modulates travel and subsistence activities in the territory.

According to anthropologist Paul Charest, Indigenous communities living by hunting and fishing develop functional adaptation strategies for environmental resources: subsistence activities combine and follow one another according to the changing constraints of a territory at different times of the year (1975: 37). These strategies nevertheless require a perceptive knowledge of the territory, which is why the Atikamekw learn from a very young age to read the signs and the traces that animals leave (bites, tracks, trails, excrement, etc.), thanks to elders who act as guides, passing on their knowledge and skills to the younger generations. Knowledge is transmitted through hunting stories told by the elders in the form of myths and legends (Éthier 2018). Anthropologist Sylvie Poirier explains that, in a society with an oral tradition like that of the Atikamekw, stories are part of a process of socialization through which members of the community learn the values and codes of their group. It is also a means by which the elders share their experiences, practices and know-how from living in the forest (Poirier 2001: 138–139). Younger generations learn the basics of hunting, trapping, and fishing, which form all the knowledge necessary to their subsistence (141).

Oral tradition turns the territory into a place of discourses that nurture both the cultural identity and the territorial knowledge of the Atikamekw (Éthier et Poirier 2018: 111). Place naming enables the Atikamekw to symbolically appropriate the territory and impart on it a part of themselves—their activities, their emotions, their memories. From this perspective, the territory acts as both a witness to and a guardian of the cultural identity of its occupants by reflecting an image of themselves. The Atikamekw therefore do not see the territory as a mere physical space; rather, they develop a state of emotional and subjective consciousness of it (Poirier 2001). The territory is found within narratives, stories, and beliefs that emerge from the mosaic of physical and metaphysical relationships that the Atikamekw have with each other and with their living environment.

For the Atikamekw, this mode of representation has determined their way of being, of thinking, and of living since their establishment

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in the Upper-Mauricie, centuries before the arrival of Euro-Canadians. While the territory still constitutes the foundation of their cosmology, their culture, and their identity, the industrial transformation of the Upper Saint-Maurice River has profoundly reshaped the Atikamekw territoriality.

INITIAL TERRITORIAL TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE UPPER SAINT-MAURICE RIVER

From the second half of the nineteenth century, the intrusion of Euro-Canadians in Upper-Mauricie—the area surrounding the Upper Saint-Maurice River—led to changes in the territorial practices of the Atikamekw. Loggers gradually encroached on the hunting territory of the Atikamekw starting in 1847, when they obtained cutting rights and established logging camps in the region. Logging began one year after the colonial government of the Province of Canada repelled the monopoly previously held by the Forges du Saint-Maurice, an ironworking industry, on the banks of the Lower Saint-Maurice (Hardy and Séguin 2004: 160). The monopoly had prevented the colonization of the valley by Euro-Canadian settlers, but after its removal, the Saint-Maurice River acted as a route for exploration of the upper reach of the river. The colonial government then proceeded to survey the land and lease timber limits, and opened the valley to more intensive logging. In 1852, it undertook the construction of a series of dams and log slides on the Saint-Maurice River and its tributaries to facilitate forest exploitation, particularly in difficult-to-access areas. These public works transformed the riverine environment, turning the watercourses into corridors for transporting wood by timber floating and accessing the northern and inland territories (405).

With the expansion of forestry activities across the watershed, the availability of wildlife decreased, as did the hunting area of the Atikamekw. During the 1860s, the cutting sectors encroached on the southern portion of the traditional territory of the Atikamekw. Loggers operated along the main tributaries of the Saint-Maurice, such as the Mattawin, Manawam, Vermillon, Wessonneau, and Rat rivers. Logging drew thousands of lumbermen, and the Euro-Canadian presence became increasingly pervasive across the watershed of the Upper Saint-Maurice. The massive

migration of lumbermen had an impact on the resources of the territory, as many engaged in poaching activities and inadvertently caused forest fires around logging sites and hunting grounds (Hardy and Séguin 2004: 183). The transformation of the forest environment by logging activities in the Upper-Mauricie caused the moose population to decline starting in the middle of the century (Gélinas 2003: 353). With the depletion of game and the degradation of wildlife habitats, it became increasingly difficult for the Atikamekw to practice their hunting and trapping activities.

Given the scarcity of the moose and other big game species they needed to feed themselves and make their clothes, the Atikamekw became dependent on fur-bearing animals. They had been involved in the fur trade since the seventeenth century, but only in the second half of the nineteenth century did the Atikamekw specialize in this type of activity (Gélinas 2003: 15). Beginning in 1827, the Hudson's Bay Company operated trading posts close to "Indian reserves," at Opitciwan and Kikendatch, where the Atikamekw exchanged furs for essential goods (food, tools, clothing). As the nineteenth century wore on, Euro-Canadian intrusion continued to challenge the traditional subsistence activities of the Atikamekw by causing further environmental degradation and further limiting the availability of wildlife, drawing them closer to a market economy (117). Hunting grounds became less and less viable, and, in some cases, were no longer sufficient to meet the food needs of the Atikamekw hunters, especially when small game became the target of Euro-Canadian poachers.

The fragmentation of the forest and the disappearance of game increased the sense of urgency among the Atikamekw. Logging, poaching, and forest fires prompted them to petition the federal Department of Indian Affairs in 1895 for reserves and protection of portions of their hunting grounds. Provided for under the Indian Act of 1876, reserves were meant to establish exclusive access to a territory. The Atikamekw's petition aimed to protect their subsistence activities from the impact of Euro-Canadian activities and to preserve their mode of production based on hunting and trapping (Gélinas 2002: 39). The challenge was to find a suitable location that met both the requirements of the Atikamekw and the obligations of the Quebec government towards the holders

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of timber licenses, as large forest areas in the Upper-Mauricie had already been leased to Euro-Canadian loggers. The Department of Indian Affairs finally granted the reserves of Wemotaci (1895), Coucoucache (1895), and Manawan (1906) (MAI 1906: 34). In 1908, a fourth application for a reserve initially targeted a land tract around the Hudson's Bay Company fur trading post in Kikendatch, but efforts to create a reserve were redirected in 1912 after the Hudson's Bay Company moved its post downstream on the Saint-Maurice River, to the outlet of Lake Opitciwan.

Despite the creation of these reserves, the Atikamekw did not obtain adequate access to their hunting grounds. The reserves did not prove large enough to cope with the growing encroachment of Euro-Canadians, and were deemed too small to ensure the subsistence of the Atikamekw. Shortly after their creation, the reserves of Wemotaci and Coucoucache became obstacles to logging activities and their existence in the territory was discredited by government agencies and timber companies (Bouchard 1980: 150–153). In the 1890s, the Department of Indian Affairs obtained the legal right to expropriate parts of reserves by using a legal provision of the Indian Act meant to facilitate the development of public works in the territory. In 1911, an amendment to the Indian Act specified that the requirements of private companies and local governments could legitimate the expropriation of reserves (Gélinas 2002: 39). This legislative amendment was in line with the industrial demands of the early twentieth century.

While in the first half of the nineteenth century the presence of Euro-Canadians in the Upper Saint-Maurice Valley was limited to fur traders and members of the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Euro-Canadian territorial ambitions increased with the opening of the Saint-Maurice River and the expansion of logging activities after 1852. It was also at that stage that Euro-Canadians began to industrialize the Saint-Maurice River and intensify the exploitation of its natural resources.

EURO-CANADIAN TERRITORIALITY AND THE STRUCTURATION OF THE SAINT-MAURICE WATERSHED

The establishment of an industrial infrastructure on the Saint-Maurice River at the start of the twentieth century was part

of a process of territorial appropriation by Euro-Canadians whereby they established their territoriality across the watershed with the appearance of new markers of occupancy. Industrialists transformed the river for the transportation of wood, the production of energy, and the manufacture of pulp and paper. Subsequently, the "will to improve" (Li 2007) the Upper Saint-Maurice prompted Euro-Canadians to undertake a new series of interventions that embrittled the territorial foundations of the Atikamekw.

Euro-Canadians extended and consolidated their territorial ambitions by dotting the northern reach of the Saint-Maurice River with industrial and urban infrastructure. In 1889, the Laurentide Pulp Company completed the construction of a pulp and paper mill and a hydroelectric dam on the west bank of the Saint-Maurice, in the parish of Ste-Flore;[4] the Laurentide also exploited 800 square kilometers of forest reserves in the region (Niosi 1975: 380). That same year, the Belgo Pulp and Paper Company built a mill at the foot of the Shawinigan Falls (Lanthier and Gamelin 1981: 186), where the Shawinigan Water and Power Company completed the construction of a hydraulic dam the following year (Bellavance 1994: 46); the Belgo held timber limits along the Grand Bostonnais River (Sieyer 1907). Between 1907 and 1910, the Brown Corporation (then known as the Quebec and St. Maurice Industrial Company) built a chemical pulp mill and a hydraulic dam on the eastern portion of the Saint-Maurice at La Tuque. Its manufacturing activities necessitated pulpwood that the company obtained from timber berths in Upper-Mauricie (Lanthier and Gamelin 1981: 216–217). Thus, the construction of an industrial infrastructure, the creation of new production centers, and the emergence of small villages and company towns led to the reorganization of the Saint-Maurice River and its watershed.

With the start of the second industrial revolution—a period marked by the intense exploitation of natural resources in the region following technoscientific developments in the field of electricity and chemistry (Caron 1997)—Euro-Canadians changed their perception of the territory and multiplied their markers of occupancy. Resources that were previously eschewed or neglected were

4. The working-class district adjacent to the factory took the name "Grand-Mère" in 1898 and obtained a municipal charter in 1901.

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assigned an economic value theretofore unseen. Tree species that prevented the growth of the valuable pine, such as black spruce and balsam fir, became the main staples of the pulp and paper industry. As more wood could be cut, the value of the timber limits increased, and so did the royalties collected by the state. New portions of the territory were becoming productive, and to meet the growing demand of the pulp and paper industry, the state delimited new timber limits north of the Upper Saint-Maurice River, on the "wasted lands" that the Crown had not yet leased. The beginning of the twentieth century therefore marked the intensification of logging and widening of logging sectors within the watershed of the Saint-Maurice River.

Likewise, the emergence of hydroelectricity changed the Euro-Canadian representation of the Saint-Maurice River. Falls and rapids were initially perceived as an impediment to lumber operations in the nineteenth century, forcing the colonial government to invest heavily in the construction of dams and slides for log driving. Eventually, they became assets for the production of the hydropower to supply not only urban centers, but also the energy-intensive industries of the second industrial revolution, such as chemical pulp manufacturing. Attracted by the abundant reserves of natural resource within the watershed, Euro-Canadians transformed the Upper Saint-Maurice River to allow for the production of hydroelectric energy as well as the collection and transportation of forest resources.[5]

As industrial activities in the region intensified at the beginning of the twentieth century, improvement of the Saint-Maurice River and regulation of its flow became a necessity for the Euro-Canadians. It also led to a reordering of the territory. Pulp and paper companies recommissioned old dams and built new ones in areas recently leased by the state. Work teams dynamited river beds, cut riparian vegetation, and removed tree trunks to prevent logs from piling up. Forest operators built small dams at the outlets of lakes to store the water needed to facilitate log driving. As the opening

5. The strongest hydraulic flows are at the falls at La Gabelle, Shawinigan Falls, Grand-Mère, La Tuque, and La Trenche and the rapids at Rapide Sans-Nom, Rapide Blanc, Rapide des Cœurs, Rapide Lièvre, and Rapide Allard (see fig. 1).

of the dam gates raised the water level downstream, it was also necessary to construct docks to protect the banks from erosion, and palisades to guide the driftwood and avoid "strays" from landing on the banks. Euro-Canadians thus reconfigured the hydrographic basin of the Saint-Maurice River to facilitate lumber operations.

The hydrological variations of the Saint-Maurice River encouraged Euro-Canadians to carry out large-scale improvement schemes on the river. In fact, seasonal low-water periods reduced the production capacity of hydroelectric power plants, in addition to hampering log-driving operations that supplied the pulp and paper mills (CECQ 1912: 14). Motivated by a common desire to regulate the flow of the Saint-Maurice River, the Shawinigan Water and Power Company and the region's forest operators created the St. Maurice Hydraulic Company in 1909 to build water storage dams upstream.[6] The first initiative of the St. Maurice Hydraulic Company was to rebuild the old dams used by forest operators for log driving, as increasing their water retention capacity required little investment.[7] Between 1908 and 1911, it undertook the reconstruction of dams on the Manouane River ("Reservoir ABC" on fig. 1, on the facing page), built some forty years earlier, to give a complementary purpose to the storage of water: that of regulating the flow of the Saint-Maurice River for the transportation of pulpwood and the production of hydroelectric energy.[8]

The improvement of the Manouane River constituted a first step in the regulation of the Saint-Maurice River and paved the way for larger-scale projects in Upper-Mauricie. In 1912, after having completed the three dams on the Manouane River, the St. Maurice

6. The regulation company was made up of the Canada Iron Corporation Ltd. (Trois-Rivières), the Quebec and St. Maurice Industrial Co. Ltd. (which later became the Brown Corporation, in La Tuque), the Laurentide Company Ltd. (Grand-Mère), Shawinigan Water and Power Company (Shawinigan Falls), the Union Bag and Paper Co. (Cap-de-la-Madeleine), the Grès Falls Co. (a subsidiary of Union Bag and Paper Co. that owned the water power rights for La Gabelle), the St. Maurice Driving and Improvement Association and the St. Maurice River Boom and Driving Co. Ltd. (McDougall 1912).
7. From a letter by E.E. Taché, the Minister of Lands and Forests of Quebec to Thomas McDougall, Vice President of Shawinigan Water and Power Company (29 Nov. 1909).
8. From a letter by Thomas McDougall to E.E. Taché (5 Feb. 1912).

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Fig. 1. Map of Power Plants on the Saint-Maurice River (Shawinigan Water and Power Company 1942: diagram A)..

Hydraulic Company requested authorization to merge the headwater lakes of the Saint-Maurice River and create a large reservoir. Because it feared conflict among the industrial users of the river, the provincial government handed the project over to the Quebec Streams Commission, a public agency responsible for surveying hydraulic resources, carrying out field studies, and building storage dams to regulate the flow of water (Lefebvre 1920: 343). The state was then involved in planning the construction of a reservoir dam a few kilometers upstream from the La Loutre Rapids, on the Upper Saint-Maurice River (Samson 2014).

Because it needed to link the construction site to the rest of the region, the Quebec Streams Commission launched the industrial colonization of the watershed by building the infrastructure needed to transport men and goods to the La Loutre Rapids. A series of relay stations and transit points appeared across the territory. One of them, the village of Sanmaur, built on the banks of the Saint-Maurice River across from Wemotaci, acted as a hub for travel to the mid-north, with workers, food supplies, machinery, and construction materials arriving there by train. Part of the work consisted of dredging the bed of the Saint-Maurice River to clear the navigation channel between the Sanmaur substation and the Chaudière Rapid upstream. A railway segment was built between the Chaudière Rapid and the proposed site for the reservoir dam to avoid a series of rapids that breaks the course of the river.[9] As the materials needed to develop the reservoir were sourced across the region, development of interconnections within the territory continued after dam construction started.[10] The activities upstream from the La Loutre Rapids reproduced on a smaller scale the larger, integrated system that Euro-Canadians established throughout the region during the first decades of the twentieth century to exploit the natural resources.

9. These were Windigo Falls (9 feet), Petit Rocher (9 feet), Mountain (35 feet), Birch (9 feet), Cypress (25 feet) and La Loutre (17 feet) (CECQ 1916 14).
10. Structural timber used for buildings, formwork and cofferdams in particular. Hydro-Québec Archives, Shawinigan Water and Power Company collection, F01/3716, Contract between the Brown Corporation and the St. Maurice Construction Company, 10 November 1915.

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The completion of the La Loutre Reservoir (renamed the Gouin Reservoir in 1919) at the end of 1917 marked a turning point in the consolidation of industrial activities across the territory of the Saint-Maurice Valley (Samson 2014).[11] The increase in water power—the constant flow reached 12,000 cubic feet per second, double the natural flow—led Euro-Canadians to consider building other hydroelectric facilities. The Shawinigan Water and Power Company entered into an agreement with other holders of hydraulic power licenses to create a hydroelectric production network along the Lower Saint-Maurice River. First, with the Laurentide Paper Company, it improved the Grand-Mère dam in 1915, just when the Quebec Streams Commission was starting its survey activities at the La Loutre Rapids (Kaelin 1919). Later, in 1923, it constructed a hydroelectric dam at La Gabelle with the Grès Falls Company, another paper manufacturer ("Une filiale à la Shawinigan"). Thanks to the additional flow provided by the reservoir, the Shawinigan Water and Power Company was eventually able to extract more hydropower from the Saint-Maurice River and use these dams to their full potential (see fig. 1).

Completion of the water regulation system also improved lumber operations across the watershed of the Saint-Maurice River and facilitated intensive logging activity over a larger portion of the territory. As the logging sites moved northward, the Gouin Reservoir played a crucial role in forestry operations from the 1920s on. The regulation of the river flow by the reservoir spared forestry operators the loss of wood along the banks during log driving operations (CECQ 1921: 10). On certain occasions, the Quebec Streams Commission also released a large amount of water to dislodge ice jams, as was the case in 1919, when more than a million logs remained blocked at Blanc Rapid (CECQ 1919: 19). The installation of the Manouane reservoirs had already made it possible to control the flow of water over a large part of the Saint-Maurice River, but the completion of the Gouin Reservoir brought the entire course of the river under control.

In addition to facilitating the transit of wood to pulp and paper mills, the reservoir dams on the Upper Saint-Maurice consoli-

11. First known as "La Loutre," the dam was officially named the Gouin dam in 1919, in honor of Lomer Gouin, Premier of Quebec between 1905 and 1920.

dated the exploitation of the forest in the north, especially along the Manouane River and the La Loutre Rapids, where the Laurentide Company and the Brown Corporation concentrated their logging activities beginning in the early 1920s (Samson 2014). The bodies of water created by the dams enabled these companies to access new sections of the wooded portions of the watershed for pulpwood. As these companies incorporated the water regulation works into their own production networks, the reservoirs facilitated the inland incursion of pulp and paper companies and became an integral part of the Euro-Canadian territoriality in the Upper Saint-Maurice.

ENVIRONMENTAL DISRUPTIONS AND THE CONFRONTATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL IMAGINATIONS

The quest for raw material and energy led Euro-Canadians to resettle the territory of the Upper-Mauricie and transform the river and its watershed to meet industrial needs. The industrialization of the river entailed the territorial dispossession of the first occupants and the mutation of their territoriality following the environmental disruptions provoked by the intensification of logging activities and the multiplication of water regulation works. Indeed, from the Atikamekw perspective, Euro-Canadians superimposed new markers of occupancy on their territory, thereby reducing the visibility of their presence and generating a phenomenon of deterritorialization.

The first step in the process of territorial appropriation by Euro-Canadians rested in the production and accumulation of territorial knowledge in order to facilitate the exploitation of natural resources in Upper-Mauricie. The Quebec government and large corporations mandated surveyors and engineers to produce surveys and maps of the region. By collecting a specific type of data in the field—those relating to potential natural resources and their possible exploitation—they produced a simplified vision of the territory, a form of "map-planning" (Bocking 1972: 68), whereby the watershed of the Upper Saint-Maurice appeared as a set of values and blueprints for the extraction of pulpwood and the generation of hydroelectricity. These spatial representations left very little room for the Atikamekw to signal their presence and the specific-

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ity of their spatial practices. While surveyors noted that the soil around the La Loutre Rapids lacked any agricultural potential, they were silent on the existence of the fish and game resources that were central to the Atikamekw (CECQ 1912: 111). Even before Euro-Canadians undertook the construction of the Gouin Reservoir, the Atikamekw had been essentially wiped from the territory by not featuring in the geographic imagination of Euro-Canadians. When asked by the president of the Quebec Streams Commission, Simon-Napoléon Parent, whether anyone would suffer damages due to the improvement of the river, the St. Maurice Hydraulic Company president answered: "I do not know of anyone" (CECQ 1912: 109). Atikamekw living in Kikendatch were only notified at the last minute. One informant later recalled: "The first thing we learned from the project manager for the construction of the dam was that the location of our meeting place was going to be flooded. And no one knew much more to be able to protest." (qtd. in Léger 1983: 176).

The exploitation of the territory by Euro-Canadians subsequently transformed the familiar landscape of the Atikamekw and the way they experienced their living environment. The construction of reservoir dams on the Upper Saint-Maurice and the spread of logging activities changed the territory. During the impoundment of the Gouin Reservoir, for example, raising the water level caused the flooding of some 100 square miles of land in the heart of the Atikamekw hunting territory. It also drowned the gathering site of Kikendatch under fifteen meters of water and partially inundated the village at the outlet of Lake Opitciwan. The cemetery and some sixty graves were also inundated, as were the hunting camps outside the village. The floodwaters reached the trading post of the Hudson's Bay Company, which not only had been notified in advance but had also received monetary compensation for its moving costs. The village of Kikendatch was also flooded in 1919 and 1920 but, according to elders who testified at the Special Claims Tribunal, "They were only able to save their blankets and clothing" (SCT 2016: 60), while their houses drifted and their personal belongings drowned.

Euro-Canadians' industrial activities also caused the disappearance of the landmarks underlying the spatial practices and the socio-

territorial organization of the Atikamekw (Fortin 1979: 31), sometimes affecting their capacity to orient themselves in this remodeled territory. For example, rather than navigating through a string of lakes at the headwaters of the Saint-Maurice, canoers faced the Gouin Reservoir, a large, undifferentiated body of water with high winds, turbulent waves, and unstable water levels (Jérôme Méquish, qtd. in Chachai and Chachai 2011). Environmental transformations also destabilized the hunting grounds, as well as their distribution and transmission, which were based on the physical attributes of the territory. Furthermore, because the engineers decided to flood the territory without removing the trees, the emaciated silhouettes of the submerged trees were decades-long reminders of the shock caused by the construction of the Gouin Reservoir.[12] These changes forced the Atikamekw to internalize new spatial signs that acknowledged the degradation of the environment and their increasingly dwindling living environment.

Environmental transformations also prevented the Atikamekw from moving freely across the territory. Canoeing became dangerous after the impoundment of the reservoir. The flooded vegetation created impassable barriers along the banks. The reservoir water level rose and fell according to the needs of the Quebec Streams Commission. In winter, these fluctuations weakened the ice and created hazards for those who ventured along frozen waterways. Steel-hulled boats facilitated navigation through the debris-laden waters of the Gouin Reservoir, but the submerged trees pierced the Atikamekw bark canoes and the wind and waves rendered canoeing more difficult (Bouchard 1980: 161). Under these conditions, the Atikamekw found it difficult to reach their gathering places and hunting and trapping sites located at the water's edge (Nehirowisiw Kitci Atisokan 2014:87).

In addition to limiting access to the territory, Euro-Canadians industrial activities had an impact on the subsistence capacity of the Atikamekw. Logging and forest fires had already reduced game habitats and hunting and trapping areas during the second half of the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the twentieth

12. According to the engineers, it was not economically profitable to log this sector as the territory to be flooded was only a vast expanse of marshes, forests ravaged by fire and land unfit for cultivation ("The Gouin Dam").

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century, the proliferation of construction sites and transportation routes accentuated the risk of fires, especially after logging companies intensified their cutting activities in the region. At the same time, the reservoir dams built on the Saint-Maurice and its tributaries flooded the hunting grounds of the Atikamekw and disrupted the local ecosystem. By altering the reproductive cycles, spawning sites, and eating habits of fish communities, the dams reduced the amount of fish, a staple of the Atikamekw diet (E.D.S. Inter inc. 1989: 85). During the hearings of the Special Claims Tribunal, the elders testified that the flooding of the land, the decomposition of wood, and the drowning of animals also caused water contamination and episodes of illness and death among the human population (SCT 2016: 60). Recounting the oral histories transmitted to them by their elders, Jérémie and David Chachai of the Atikamekw d'Opitciwan First Nation "mentioned the carcasses of moose that had drowned because they had become disoriented and that were now floating in the reservoir, drowned beavers trapped in cages, birds and birds' nests that had been submerged by the waters" (125). Furthermore, given that wildlife proliferated on lakeshores and riverbanks, the reconfiguration of watercourses degraded the habitat and feeding sites of fur-bearing animals, big game, and waterfowl and caused their reproduction rates to fall in the years following the impoundment of the Gouin Reservoir (Fortin 1979: 22). The rise in the water level therefore led to the decline and migration of fauna, conditions under which many Atikamekw families were no longer able to make a living from their shoreline hunting grounds.

Not knowing where to go, hunters had to relocate to the outskirts of flooded areas and modify their portage routes and itineraries (Éthier and Poirier 2018: 108). Their convergence in areas spared by industry nevertheless increased the ecological load and hunting pressures. Due to the disappearance of hunting grounds and the depletion of wildlife, it became more difficult for Atikamekw hunters to maintain their conservation practices, such as leaving at least one pair of beavers per lodge or alternating between trapping grounds (Bouchard 1980: 194–195). At the end of the 1930s, the missionary Joseph-Étienne Guinard pointed out that famine occurred more frequently among the Atikamekw, who had to rely more and more often on the Department of Indian Affairs to ensure their survival ("Le Père Guinard"

1939: 10). The Atikamekw thus developed a state of dependence on the department, coincidentally allowing Euro-Canadians to increase their administrative control over the Upper-Mauricie.

Eventually, the forced withdrawal of the Atikamekw from areas exploited by Euro-Canadians, the disappearance of their identity referents, the loss of their territorial bases, and the difficulty of maintaining their traditional subsistence practices interfered with the Atikamekw process of cultural transmission. The loss of access to the territory created an intergenerational break, as it was in the forest that the elders passed on their knowledge to the younger people and that the myths materialized.[13] Among the Atikamekw, the preservation of customs and the construction of culture required a collective imagination based on knowledge of, and acquaintance with, the territory (Poirier 2001: 112), but environmental transformations limited their ability to preserve their way of life and their ancestral practices.

Industrialization therefore acted as a de-territorializing force by obliterating the markers of occupancy initially found in the territory (Sack 1986). It dislocated the history and identity of the Atikamekw, as their presence and sites of memory became less visible. Areas degraded by industry lay at the heart of the Atikamekw's way of life and community organization; these had been hunting grounds, meeting points, and geographical landmarks (Poirier 2001: 105). Even after they were permanently flooded, these significant places continued to be identified by the Atikamekw as part of their traditional territory (McNulty and Gilbert 1981: 212), although several of these areas ceased to be living environments for the Atikamekw (Gélinas 2002: 45). Yet, despite its negative social and environmental impacts, industrialization offered the Atikamekw economic opportunities and an alternative to the fur trade, which had started to become a less stable source of income. Like other Indigenous communities in the middle-north of Quebec, the Atikamekw turned to wage labor, with some working as guides for explorers, tourists, and sport

13. Other factors in the second half of the twentieth century included the forced attendance of residential schools, the growing sedentarization of the Atikamekw people and an elevation of the crest of the dam in 1948 (Poirier 2000: 144).

hunters, and others becoming forest workers on the logging sites of the Upper-Mauricie (Labrecque 1984: 82).

CONCLUSION

From the first decades of the twentieth century, Euro-Canadians imprinted symbolic and material markers that concealed what initially existed in the territory of the Upper-Mauricie and that were the very foundations of their territoriality. The flooding of the land resulting from the impoundment of the reservoir erased points that anchored the Atikamekw to the territory, whether geographical or identity markers, sites of memories, gathering places, cemeteries, or hunting and trapping grounds. Euro-Canadians superimposed a spatial grid on the Atikamekw system of exchange, communication and production.

Deterritorialization tools such as surveys and maps and the infrastructural reconfiguration of the Saint-Maurice River transformed the Upper-Mauricie into an industrial system intended for the production of hydroelectric energy and the transportation of pulpwood. In this process of deterritorialization, the industrialization of the Saint-Maurice River and its watershed disturbed the Atikamekw's way of life, their social organization and their geographical imagination. In the past, the Atikamekw had adapted to natural fluctuations in the biotope, but what can be said about the anthropogenic changes to the watershed of the Upper Saint-Maurice River that followed the intrusion of Euro-Canadians? When the Atikamekw faced another series of upheavals in the 1940s and 1950s (the spread of logging sectors on the periphery of the Gouin Reservoir, the construction of other hydroelectric dams in Upper-Mauricie, the closure of the Hudson's Bay Company trading posts, the raising of the crest of the Gouin dam, and the enlargement of the reservoir), these changes were simply an extension of what they had been experiencing for the past century. Moreover, their nomadic reality had always demanded adaptation strategies. Their testimonies during the hearings of the Specific Claims Tribunal of Canada were another illustration that, despite the material transformations of the watershed, the Atikamekw maintained their traditional relationship with the territory rather than having had their identity succumb to a historical break.

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"STRANGERS STILL MORE STRANGE"

The Meaning of Rivers Bedeviled

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The volume of a strange, eventful, and ever-changing life is before you, on the pages of which are impressed phases of original character such as are nowhere else exhibited, nowhere seen, but on the Mississippi.

–T.B. Thorpe

The rocks appear broken up in odd fantastic shapes, taking the name of devil's tea table, backbone, oven, grand tower, etc.

–Eliza Steele

Though her voyage of twelve hundred miles extends from apple to orange, from clime to clime, yet, like any small ferry-boat, to right and left, at every landing, the huge Fidèle still receives additional passengers in exchange for those that disembark; so that, though always full of strangers, she continually, in some degree, adds to, or replaces them with strangers still more strange; like Rio Janeiro fountain, fed from the Corcovado mountains, which is ever overflowing with strange waters, but never with the same strange particles in every part.

–Herman Melville

Few topics could be better suited to multi-disciplinary areas of inquiry than "The River." At once connecting and separating bioregions, nations, and cultures of the Americas, their meanings changing throughout history as readily as their waters, rivers run through time and space bearing richly diverse and significant

contents, best approached from numerous and varied scholarly perspectives. Due to this inherent complexity, the case of rivers evidences the potential importance of literature and literary thinking within inter- or transdisciplinary studies. While each discipline-specific approach has unique contributions to make, in this essay I argue for the special value of literature, particularly when the subject under discussion is "The River." Literature can contribute to the meaning of rivers not because it brings clarity to our understanding, but precisely because it does not. To explore this bold and peculiar claim, I will consider early nineteenth-century literature of the United States, giving special attention to the rise of the steamboat and its effect on the Mississippi River.

Steamboats transformed rivers in the 1800s, representing what seemed to be a kind of mastery over nature. In literature from the period, while many writers marveled at or exulted in that perceived mastery, some questioned the origins of technological conquest. Did it result from human ingenuity? divine inspiration? a deal with the devil? Looking at writings from the perspective of twenty-first century scholarship, other questions take shape: Did steamboats alter the *nature* of American rivers? How did they affect the *meaning* of rivers? With all the fog, smoke, and various other vapors associated with the steamboat, and with rivers' own intricacies, clarity proves elusive; nor does literature necessarily shed light on the matter. Literature and literary study, however, do afford an opportunity to think differently about steamboats and rivers and related phenomena. Oddly enough, literature does this less by elucidation than by what at first may seem a species of obfuscation. With elements of imagination, critical insight, and language, literary texts can propose connections, reveal complexity, and assist us in navigating uncertainty.

In what follows, I explore the dynamic interrelations among rivers, steamboats, and literature, first by considering some of the earliest writing about American steamboats, their strangeness as watercraft and their role in the supposed technological conquest of Nature. Next, I briefly survey types of steamboat literature from the period before the Civil War, concluding with a study of Herman Melville's last novel, *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade*

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(1857). No literary work captured the tensions, ambiguity, and some of the potential implications of steamboat travel as powerfully as *The Confidence-Man*, which develops Melville's notion that "books of fiction" can perhaps give readers more truth, "more reality, than real life itself can show" (217). Literature, for Melville, was an opportunity to reconsider the nature of things and our means of understanding that nature. In *The Confidence-Man*, he presented readers with a different view of the Mississippi River and the curious vessels working its waters. The novel imagined The Devil himself to be on board a riverboat, wearing the different guises of a huckster and imperiling the soul of America.

UNBERUFEN (THE DEVIL UNSUMMONED)

If rivers by themselves are, in most circumstances, difficult to fathom, when rivers and literature come together clarity goes by the wayside. Add steamboats to the mix and things get downright diabolically difficult to sort out. So diabolical, in fact, that in order to explore this confusing fusion, I have adopted a phrase from Mark Twain to guide the investigation. After a family sojourn in Europe, Twain brought back many souvenirs, including the German word *unberufen*, which he frequently used in conversation and correspondence (Besalke 2007: 111). Roughly equivalent to "knock on wood," the word means unbidden or unsummoned (as in, "May the devil be unbidden") to ward off evil meddling in their affairs. For this study, *unberufen* signals an interest in how the steamboat radically altered the way people looked at waterways, bedeviling the meaning of rivers.

The bedeviling occurred in various ways. Steamboats enabled nineteenth-century Americans to control space by moving upriver as readily as down. Given enough water in which to run and enough firewood to drive the engines, riverboats could triumph over natural forces such as gravity and current. Just as significantly, steamboats revised American rivers by affording us the means of superimposing human time on the river. Robert Fulton's *Clermont*, steaming from New York City to Albany in thirty-two hours in 1807, led the way to increasingly faster runs—eighteen hours in 1817, under eight hours by 1849—and ever more regular timetables for scheduled stops (Buckman 1907: 66). This imposition

wasn't fool-proof, as pilots like Sam Clemens knew well. A snag or a sawyer, a shifty sandbar or low water-levels could leave a steamboat grounded and tear a hole in a captain's schedule, setting him back hours, even days.

Writing from Cairo, Illinois to a St. Louis newspaper during a period of low water in December 1860, a pilot believed to be Clemens, having found himself with "the opportunity of having nothing else to do but to drop you a line," recorded a recent series of navigational mishaps. Heading downriver from St. Louis, the writer noted that his boat (the *Sunshine*) "Passed E.M. Ryland aground at the head of Cahokia bend; found the Dan. G. Taylor and the C.E. Hillman in the same predicament, at Cairo cliffs; spent the night assisting the Hillman." The ensuing report recorded day after day of similar steamboat misfortunes: "the diminutive side wheel *Colona* high and dry at the mouth of the Meramec"; the *Hillman* (again!) stuck at Plateau Rock; the *D.G. Taylor* (again!) "hard and fast aground" at Sheep island, the *Anglo Saxon* and the *Lebanon* "in the same delightful position" (Marleau 2016: 139).

The litany of woe winds up with the correspondent's own boat at "the Tea Table cooling our bottom on the sand bars, in company with the following boats […] viz: The J.D. Perry, C.E. Hillman, D.G. Taylor, J.H. Dickey, Champion, Carrier, Lebanon, Lehigh, Saxon, Wood, Sam Gaty, South Wester, Hannibal, and E.M. Ryland bound down; John Warner and Arizona bound up" (Marleau 2016: 139).[1] Whoever the author was (and Michael H. Marleau makes a strong argument that it was Sam Clemens), his correspondence, written "in these stirring times of secession, no money and low water," provides a humorous glimpse into some of the perils of steamboating, the notoriously ever-shifting "state of the lower (one might almost say the lowest) Mississippi" (139), and the liveliness of literary efforts to reckon with the uncertainties of their intersection. The above-mentioned "Tea Table," by the way, on which the *Sunshine* "cooled its bottom"? It was more formally known as the *Devil's* Tea Table, on the Missouri side of the Mississippi. *Unberufen*, reader, *unberufen*.

1. Marleau quotes a "FRIEND REPORTER" signing himself "SAM," in a "SPECIAL RIVER CORRESPONDENCE" to the *St. Louis Missouri Republican* of 15 December 1860.

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Early writings feature the peculiarity of the steamboat, its uniqueness among water craft, and its apparent victory over Nature. Speaking in Congress in 1824, Henry Clay trumpeted the triumph of Culture as represented by the steamboat, "laden with the riches of all quarters of the world, with a crowd of gay, cheerful, and protected passengers, now dashing into the midst of the current, or gliding through eddies near the shore!" Clay personified Nature, who is awed by Man's ingenuity (as embodied in the figure of the steamboat's putative inventor): "Nature herself seems to survey, with astonishment, the passing wonder, and, in silent submission, reluctantly to own the magnificent triumphs, in her own vast dominion, of Fulton's immortal genius!" (Seelye 1991: 241). Astonishment, wonder, submission—such qualities surface frequently in the writings pertaining to the development of "the beautiful machine," an engineering marvel that overcame the "obduracy" of American rivers and "made a more perfect Union possible" (8–9).

The steamboat entered the waters of early American literature decades before the first fire was stoked in Fulton's *Clermont*, as the subject of a colonial and provincial controversy involving rival inventors James Rumsey and John Fitch. Their writings, from the 1780s, attempt to achieve a certain clarity on two main matters by (1) proving that steam navigation is more than a pipe-dream; and (2) establishing proprietorship of the dream's origin. A veil of uncertainty surrounded the steamboat at the outset of its literary career, as can be seen in the title of Rumsey's contribution to the fray: *A Short Treatise on the Application of Steam, Whereby Is Clearly Shewn, from Actual Experiments, That Steam May Be Applied to Propel Boats or Vessels of Any Burthen Against Rapid Currents with Great Velocity. Great Velocity* (1788). The publication consists of an anthology of letters, depositions, certifications, and the certification of certifications, all of which, taken together, are intended to "deprive even the sceptic of his doubt" that the "wonderful force of steam, issuing in incredible quantities" could drive a boat. Rumsey's lengthy pamphlet essays to wipe away all doubts regarding the steamboat's viability and establish primacy of his creation (Rumsey 1788: 4, 9).

Fitch fought back with his own publication, *The Original Steam-Boat Supported; Or, A Reply to Mr. James Rumsey's Pamphlet. Shewing the True Priority of John Fitch, and the False Datings, &c. of James Rumsey.* Fitch's discourse began with a biting jibe regarding his opponent's literary output. Coyly proposing that Rumsey may have greater "skill in the mechanism of the Steam Engine," Fitch added that "in the article of CONDENSATION I freely acknowledge he is my superior, having acquired the art of *condensing* (with the dash of his pen) one *whole year* in the compass of *six days*" (Fitch 1788). In a literary cut worthy of Twain or Melville, Fitch played with dual senses of a word to depict the calumny of one who had labeled him calumnious. He went on to state that "the thought of a Steam Boat" first occurred to him in April 1785, though "some [including Thomas Paine] had *conceived* the thought before, yet I was the first that ever exhibited a plan to the public…" (1788: 3). He claimed to have spoken with George Washington himself about the concept, and that the General mentioned Rumsey's idea but did not discourage Fitch from pursuing his own course.

Fitch's own certificates were appended (from the American Philosophical Society, Patrick Henry, and the like), and, accentuating the literariness of the controversy, Fitch even included "Mr. Rumsey's invidious pamphlets" (1788: 7). This appendix added substance to the careful reading Fitch displayed in his pamphlet, a literary analysis that yielded significant observations, among them the fact that Rumsey omitted the word "Steam" from his dealings with Gen. Washington and various legislatures. Fitch used a piece of Washington's writing, as well as Rumsey's own petition to the "Honourable Representatives of the State of Pennsylvania," in order to prove the point that Rumsey's approach involved "the art of working Boats by mechanism and small manual assistance against rapid currents," the word "steam" failing to appear in either work. According to Fitch, Rumsey may perhaps be inventive but his invention was not a steamboat, his plans containing "nothing but water wheels, cranks and setting poles" (7–9). By paying great attention to the text of Rumsey's anthology, by looking for the occurrence and meaning of specific key terms, and by juxtaposing the contexts of various documents,

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Fitch's writing sought to correct misinformation and clarify the historical origins of the steamboat once and for all.

Taken as a whole, the literary dispute of Rumsey versus Fitch serves as a preface to a larger story about other tensions in the early United States: steamboats vs. rivers, North vs. South, science vs. superstition, Truth vs. uncertainty. These tensions further connect with the perceived battle in Enlightenment thought between concepts of 'Culture' and concepts of 'Nature,' as well as with issues of patriotism and the developing US nation-state. As Henry Clay's 1824 Congressional speech suggests, officials understood the steamboat to represent the victorious campaign of American Culture, at the head of which campaign had once marched George Washington himself, "a patron saint of civil engineering" in the young nation (Seelye 1991: 6). Rumsey had written to Washington as early as March 1785, admitting that steamboats will strike many as "strange and improbable" but assuring his reader that, due to the "immense" power of steam, "boats of passage may be made to go against the current of the *Mississippi* or *Ohio* rivers" (Rumsey 1788: 26). Rivers were depicted as antagonists to be bested, arenas in which to prove a Culture's superiority, routes of national progress. The earliest steamboat literature attempted to expel doubts, certify certain truths, and use those newly minted truths to build bright prospects for the future.

"LIKE SOME HUGE DEMON OF THE WILDERNESS" (DEAL WITH THE DEVIL)

Nevertheless, when Fulton's *Clermont* chugged up the Hudson River in 1807, the steamboat was still something of a chimera, fantastic at best and maybe monstrous. Washington Irving called the steamboat an "unwelcome agent of change," and many in the US were positively terrified by such signs of technological progress. Even in the latter half of the nineteenth century, writers were still describing profound misgivings. In "The Power of Prayer; or The First Steamboat up the Alabama" (1875), one of their "dialect poems" written after the Civil War, brothers Clifford and Sidney Lanier, both veterans of the Confederate army, imagined the perspective of "Jim," an old and nearly blind African American, and his encounter with the strange and improbable steamboat. Acknowledging that "present-day readers will take

issue" with the poem's racism and degrading stereotypes, literary historian Bert Hitchcock observed that, "in its time the poem was a popular dramatic public-performance piece for professional 'readers' both inside and outside the South" (2009).

The poem described Jim's reaction as he sits in a cabin and hears something coming down the Alabama River, alternately bellowing like a bull and squealing like a sow. Almost immediately, Jim senses the diabolical nature of so unnatural a tumult: "De Debble's comin' round dat bend, he's comin' shuh enuff, / A-splashin' up de water wid his tail and wid his hoof!" (Lanier and Lanier 1875: 240). Scared off, perhaps, by Jim's prayer, The Devil passes on by and heads upstream, perceptible now only as a "snort way off, likOe in a dream!" (240). Think of the river on a quiet afternoon, softly sloshing at your nineteenth-century feet as you listen to birdsong and catch something of the faint rustle of cottonwood leaves. Suddenly: an unknown cacophony! a massive object rapidly and fiercely stemming the current! Something so strange, so big, so loud, belching smoke, must be a dragon, as some supposed, or worse. And that's only the perspective from the shore; little wonder then that Lydia Latrobe Roosevelt, on board the *New Orleans* in 1811, referred to the voyage as the "days of horror" (Seelye 1991: 240). For many, when "The Devil" rounded the bend, rivers, the world they watered, and the truths by which one made sense of that world were changed irrevocably.

Fulton's innovation and the iterations developed by his successors were "the means by which the United States would become a beautiful machine" (Seelye 1991: 231), and that machine drastically remade American rivers. The steamboat figured prominently in assorted literary types in the nineteenth century, often in first-hand accounts written by diverse passengers on board the floating palaces. These narratives can be sorted into several categories, dependent upon the writer's reason for being on the river, the reason for writing, and the readership targeted by the writer. The body of literature suggests the effect of new technology on the meaning of rivers at the time, especially the Ohio and the Mississippi. Often the steamboat was portrayed as an emblem of the nation itself: all sorts of things going on, all kinds of people brought together by all kinds of causes, united only by the fact that they're collected

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in one place and on the move, going *somewhere* [...] though God knows where.

Much of this literature revolved around and reinforced the perceived battle between Nature and Culture. As Joseph Cowell, a passenger on the *Helen McGregor* in 1829, put it, only the "peculiar navigation" of the steamboat could "combat with the unceasing, serpentine, tempestuous current of the *I-will-have-my-own-way*, glorious Mississippi" (1998: 67). Observing that among Americans, "OLD-BIG-STRONG" (as he translated the word "Mississippi") "ranks first in importance," the popular Thomas Bangs Thorpe told his readers that the river teaches "terrible lessons of strength and sublimity" (1989: 101–02). To properly learn those lessons, according to Thorpe, one must respect the river's power but contest it, and must see that the value of the river lies not in its beauty but its commercial potential. After proposing that the real interest in the Mississippi "consists not in attractive scenery visible to the eye at any given point, but in the thoughts it suggests," Thorpe explained that those thoughts invariably tend toward the "value of the commerce carried on in Western steamboats" (1855: 27). As the number of boats increased and their potential uses were recognized, "the means for the glorious triumph of Western commerce was complete," a clear result of the "mighty triumphs of steam in the Valley of the Mississippi" (Thorpe 1855: 33–34). In this view, shared by many, American civilization had won the war with Nature, a victory manifested by the shining machine as it progressed up and down the river.

An alternative view of the situation appeared in Timothy Flint's *A Condensed Geography and History of the Western States, or the Mississippi Valley* (1828). Flint characterized the relation between Culture and Nature as less of a war and more of "contrast," evident to any passenger "descending the Mississippi for the first time in one of these steam boats." After admitting that a "stranger to this mode of travelling would find it difficult to describe" the experience, Flint carefully detailed "the prodigious construction" and "commodious arrangements" of the vessel, "the splendor of the cabin, its beautiful finishings of the richest woods, its rich carpeting, its mirrors and fine furniture, its sliding

tables, its bar room," and emphasized the steamboat's "order, quiet and regularity" (1998: 11).

Having established the controlled and comfortable situation of the traveler on board, Flint turned to the enchanting riverine environment: "The varied and verdant scenery shifts about you. The trees, the green islands, the houses on the shore, every thing has an appearance, as by enchantment, of moving past you" (1828: 241). For Flint, steamboat passage presented a "moving pageant," gliding along between islands "so even, so beautiful, and regular, that they seem to have been planted for a pleasure ground," and the mainland, where one might espy "a plantation, with all its busy and cheerful accompaniments" (241). Note how the "enchanting" vista provided by the deck of the steamboat turns everything into a charming "moving pageant" or motion picture, predicting the panorama craze that would soon follow. Note also that even a plantation, from the floating perspective, appears "cheerful" and charming. In his depiction of river-travel, Flint connects the opulence and order on board the steamboat to a pastoral beauty surrounding its passage. The river here serves as a vehicle connecting Culture and Nature.

That connection, however, is not stable. Although the steamboat traveler might cruise along enjoying the "splendor and comfort, the cheerfulness of a floating hotel," the wild and its dangers never really go away: "At other times you are sweeping along for many leagues together, where either shore is a boundless and pathless wilderness. A contrast is thus strongly forced upon the mind, of the highest improvement and the latest pre-eminent invention of art with the most lonely aspect of a grand but desolate nature…." Flint's contrast describes a river under the control of Culture and affording Americans safe passage through "a wild and uninhabited forest, it may be an hundred miles in width, the abode only of bears, owls and noxious animals" (1998: 11–12). The well-lighted displays of gaiety and leisure on board the steamboat appear all the more bright against the dark backdrop beyond the river's banks. This Nature-Culture tension lies at the heart of the Mississippi's status as *the* national river in antebellum America, a representative of the nation's steady progress on its "errand in the wilderness" but also of continuing vicissitudes.

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For other writers of the period, neither was the river so safe nor the steamboat so comfortable. The Mississippi posed any number of perils, with its fluctuations and fogs and obstacles. Little wonder that boatmen often conferred supernatural titles on a variety of natural phenomena. Eliza Steele, on board the *Monsoon* for an 1840 voyage to Cincinnati, recalled that "The rocks appear broken up in odd fantastic shapes, taking the name of devil's tea table, [devil's] backbone, [devil's] oven, [devil's] grand tower, etc." (1998: 72). Travelers of the day seemed to delight in these figures of speech, relying on them to add color to their narratives. T. B. Thorpe recalled a woodyard situated at "a place so infested with 'snags'" that it had been "christened … the 'Devil's Promenade'" (1855: 40). (The Devil's Promenade, readers were told, in case they wished to find it, "lies at the mouth of 'Dead Man's Bend,' just at the foot of 'Gouge-your-eye-out Island.'") Charles Augustus Murray wrote of "a place called Devil's Island," where the pilot of the steamboat seemed demonically possessed, running "our boat right on a sand-bank" (1998: 157).

Such sinister sites contributed to the dread experienced by many a steamboat passenger. Thomas Hamilton, voyaging downriver from Louisville to New Orleans in 1831, felt that a grim darkness emanated from the river: "the prevailing character of the Mississippi is that of solemn gloom. I have trodden the passes of Alp and Appenine, yet never felt how awful a thing is nature, til I was borne on its waters, through regions desolate and uninhabitable" (1998: 54). If Nature were evil, Culture offered little relief: Hamilton likened the boat itself to "some huge demon of the wilderness, bearing fire in her bosom, and canopying the eternal forest with the smoke of her nostrils" (54). After four or five thousand miles on the "Western waters" in the early 1830s, Charles Joseph Latrobe remarked that "there are few voyages of more evident peril in the world than that from St. Louis or Louisville to New Orleans, or vice versa…" (1998: 29). Human technology may have conquered the river's current, but in doing so it ushered in a host of horrors: "casualties incident to the navigation arising from snags, ice, rocks, fire"; "the peril which impends over you from a tremendous power like that of steam"; "being left under the direction of incompetent or careless men," all of which caused "numbers"

of people to "perish" (1998: 29). To justify his lament, Latrobe appended a list of steamboat disasters from July 1831 to July 1833, including sixteen vessels "burnt," twenty-two "snagged," fourteen "sunk," and fifteen "abandoned as unfit" (29). Though oppressed by the river and its atmosphere, Thomas Hamilton tried to make light of the danger, writing that "one or two" steamboats "generally blow up every season," tossing their "parboiled passengers to an inconvenient altitude in the atmosphere" (1998: 48).

To many writers of the period, the dangers of the steamboat itself were less of a threat than the damning behavior of those on board. An English geologist, G. W. Featherstonhaugh, complained in 1834 about the "incontrovertible evidences of a fallen nature" and the "wretches" who, "maddened with the inflaming and impure liquors they swallowed, filled the cabin with an infernal vociferation of curses, and a perfect pestilence of smoking and spitting in every direction" (1998: 109–10). Charles Latrobe testified that, based on his experience, "The mass of the society met with upon the Western boats is … to be designated by the single term, bad" (1998: 34). Although the more jovial Hamilton seemed unfazed by all the "gambling and drinking, and wrangling and swearing," he could not tolerate another form of evil. "But there were some things to which I had not become accustomed, and one of these was slavery"—especially sharing a steamboat with a slave-dealer. The page nearly shudders beneath Hamilton's hand as he concludes, "But I will not enlarge on a subject so revolting. I remember, however, that no one on board talked about freedom so loudly or so long as this slave-dealer. He at length left us, and the sky seemed brighter, and the earth greener, after his departure" (1998: 52–53). It was as if the Devil himself had darkened the decks of the craft, and only his going ashore let life and light back on the boat.

William Wells Brown did enlarge on the subject of slavery, precisely because it was so revolting. His and other narratives by formerly enslaved persons further elucidate the ambiguous nature of steamboats, the evil and the good, and the consequences of that ambiguity on North American rivers. Born in Kentucky around 1814, Brown served various masters for twenty years, and a large portion of that time he worked on steamboats plying the Western waters of the upper and lower Mississippi, the Mis-

souri, and the Ohio (Buchanan 2004: 19). In recounting his bondage, Brown described his work as a waiter on board the *Enterprize*, out of St. Louis, "then running on the upper Mississippi." He found river work to be relatively "pleasant" compared to other conditions for the enslaved, but even so, "in passing from place to place, and seeing new faces every day, and knowing that they could go where they pleased, I soon became unhappy, and several times thought of leaving the boat at some landing place, and trying to make my escape to Canada…" (Brown 1847: 31).

As one of the many thousands of people in servitude within the steamboat industry, William Wells Brown knew the river well, the world surrounding that river, and the slave-dealers of that world who traded him and his relatives. He recalled landing at Hannibal, Missouri (Mark Twain's hometown), where "the boat took on board … a drove of slaves, bound for the New Orleans market. They numbered from fifty to sixty, consisting of men and women from eighteen to forty years of age. A drove of slaves on a southern steamboat, bound for the cotton or sugar regions, is an occurrence so common, that no one, not even the passengers, appear to notice it, though they clank their chains at every step" (1847: 33–34). Brown wrote of steamboats as floating exhibitions of the institution of slavery, of being rented to a slave-driver or "soul-driver," of the agonies he witnessed and those he personally endured. And he wrote as well of the steamboat as the means of escaping those agonies. Thomas C. Buchanan notes, in *Black Life on the Mississippi*, how "the steamboats that moved up and down the Mississippi River carried the tentacles of slavery and racism, but they also carried liberating ideas and pathways to freedom" (2004: 5). Brown's account makes clear that steamboats went both ways: up and down the river, against and with the flow, deeper into territory of nightmarish servitude and northwards toward liberty.

Vehicles of servitude and vehicles of freedom—William Wells Brown's narrative elucidates the conflicting meanings of steamboats and rivers in the nineteenth century. Another aspect of that conflict appeared in one of the more popular forms of literature in that period: humorous sketches of life along the Mississippi and other rivers, published in sporting magazines such as *Spirit of the Times.* One of the best known writers of the day, Thomas

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Bangs Thorpe, customarily teased forth comedic aspects from the backwoods and backwaters of the southwest, though he occasionally wrote about more somber matters (including an anti-slavery novel). "Scenes of the Mississippi," one of his many articles in the *Spirit of the Times*, began, "It has been the policy of the United States Government to remove the Indians west of the Mississippi." Thorpe, adopting a tone in sympathy with the Seminoles, observes that "these 'removals' are always melancholy exhibitions," and describes the affected indigenous peoples as always "dispirited and heart-broken." He goes on to discuss one such removal of "near four hundred Seminoles" that he witnessed while taking passage on board a steamboat bound from New Orleans upriver to St. Louis in the late 1830s (1989: 129).

Though similar in form to other, more comedic accounts of the exploits of frontiersmen, the tone of "Scenes of the Mississippi" is mostly solemn. As the trip gets under way, Thorpe's narrator registers his dismay regarding the "numerous and novel passengers," a nod to the increasing "influx of settlers" that was transforming the "natural scenery" of the western US, eliminating a "genuine source of its national identity" (Estes 1989: 9). The narrator expresses pity for the Seminoles, who mostly float alongside the steamboat in an attached "tender." Contrasted with the mighty vessel roaring against the river current, the "Indians" represent the past and the waning glory of the wild. The Seminoles, observes the narrator, were "consum[ed] with slow fever" and had little to look forward to but "funeral rites and the obscurity of the grave" (Thorpe 1989: 129–30).

A key event occurs early in the sketch and underscores the Seminoles' physical and spiritual wasting away due to the forced removal from their homelands: an old man, bearing the marks of a chief, utters "a faint chant." The narrator notes that the man's chanting, "as it continued to swell on the evening breeze," affects the "slumbering warriors that lay about," and their eyes "open and flash with unearthly fires, sometimes exhibiting pleasure, but oftener ferocity and hatred." As "the old man sang on," others sway in a kind of trance or qui-

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etly sing along, until the old man "ceased, turned his face full to the setting sun, and fell back a corpse" (Thorpe 1989: 131). Although Thorpe here, as elsewhere in his writings, used this event to lament the passing of a way of life, he also infused the atmosphere surrounding the Seminoles with otherworldliness. The narrator reports that as the chief passes away, his countrymen look back "in the direction of their homes" in sorrow (131), and as the river journey continues, the people perish one by one: "at every landing where the boat stopped some poor Indian was taken ashore and hastily buried," their remains left behind as the steamboat, emblematic of progress, rumbles on (132–33). Instead of dwelling on the tragic nature of these deaths, however, the narrator introduces the views of a fellow white passenger, who refers to the Seminoles as "red skinned devils" and interprets the chief's dying words as boasting about his "infernal deeds" (131). The narrator himself refrains from demonic terminology in reference to the Seminoles; but he never corrects other white characters when they do, letting their words linger in the air and mix with the mechanical workings of the steamboat as it chugs on inexorably.

"Scenes of the Mississippi," like other such sketches, blended racism and curiosity, remorse for the passing of the "old ways" and acceptance of "progress." At issue here is the seeming triumph of Culture over Nature. Near the end of the story, on the morning after the chief's death, "A deep, damp, opaque Mississippi river fog, had swallowed us up." Abruptly, the steamboat runs aground on a sand-bar. After hours of monotony relieved briefly by the confusion of an impromptu bear-hunt, the narrator gladly reports, "the bell sounded; *we moved*; and the steamer pursued its way" (Thorpe 1989: 134). The ship lurches forth, the past is left behind, and civilization rolls on. Scholar David C. Estes has asserted that "Thorpe did not agree with the predominant feeling that the region needed to become civilized. Its greatness did not lie in the future, he believed, but in what was rapidly becoming its past" (1989). Even so, in the end, as was apparently inevitable, "*we moved*"—forward, borne on the decks of shining technology, off of the blasted sand-bar and toward a new national identity.

The advent of the steamboat allowed writers of the period to couple their curiosity about the new world they were entering with concerns about the world being left behind. Estes, drawing on other American scholars, believes that Thorpe understood American culture to typify "an irreconcilable opposition between Nature and civilization" (Estes 1989: 9). While in the widely held view of the day, the steamboat symbolized mastery over the river, Thorpe and others offered a different view, using the page to explore a more complex relation between boats and rivers, Nature and Culture. Steamboat literature helped give shape to the US in the nineteenth century by offering readers a different view of the strange new world in the making, with particular attention paid to American contributions to that world.

Thorpe, for example, underscored the diversity of the steamboat cabin, which "strangely mingled every phase of social life." One of the most significant features of the Mississippi River in the middle nineteenth century was the rich assortment of passengers being moved up and down its waters: "The crowd of passengers ordinarily witnessed on our Mississippi steamers present more than is any where else observable in a small space, the cosmopolitanism of our extraordinary population" (Thorpe 1855: 34). Writers depicted the steamboat as an American microcosm, a diverse mixture of people from various regions and nationalities representing a brand of American exceptionalism. In this larger historical context, rife with concerns about nature, technology, the nation, and cosmopolitanism, Herman Melville's steamer novel *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* (1857) takes on special significance.

Melville's last novel, *The Confidence-Man* was written a few years after the publication of *Moby-Dick* (1851), and comes out of the author's state of literary frustration. He had enjoyed success with travel narratives and adventure tales but had higher aspirations, believing that there was more to literature than information and amusement. "Books of fiction," he wrote, can perhaps give readers "more reality, than real life can show"; literature provided an opportunity to reconsider and even remake the nature of reality, by applying imagination and thoughtful inquiry to the stuff of life,

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in the process creating a "nature unfettered, exhilarated, in effect transformed" (1990: 217–218). This transformation, which involved tackling difficult political and philosophical questions with an open mind, required responsible action by writers and interpreters alike in making the most of literature's potential.

Accordingly, *The Confidence-Man* challenges readers on numerous levels. Although the plot is straight-forward enough, the novel is difficult to summarize. The story encompasses a single day of a downriver steamboat voyage on the Mississippi from St. Louis to New Orleans, beginning with pre-dawn preparations for departure and ending late that night at an indefinite point under way, and most of the "action" entails a series of conversations between passengers. This simple sketch, however, does not adequately represent the novel's complexity, signaled by several subtle features of the journey. The not quite twenty-four hours of the trip unfold on April Fool's Day, on board "the favourite steamer *Fidèle*" as it works the waters of the Mississippi River, the nation's central artery (1990: 7). The meaningful contrast between the boat's name (connoting faithfulness, loyalty, fidelity) and the timing of its trip (a day of deception, hoax, and dupery) is increased on the first page by a placard on the lower deck of the boat "nigh the captain's office" warning of the possible presence on board of "a mysterious impostor, supposed to have recently arrived from the East; quite an original genius in his vocation, as would appear" (7).

As the simple plot thickens, readers begin to see that this "original genius" in the vocation of trickery and the art of deception has indeed taken passage on the ship of faith. Melville updates the résumé of The Devil by posing him as the consummate Confidence-Man and providing him with a series of shifting-shapes—the "masquerade" of the title—under the guise of which he tempts fellow steamboat travelers with sundry hooks and ruses. Both The Devil's appearance and his mode of operations vary considerably, taking on over half a dozen different get-ups, and an inattentive reader might well miss the connections. Services are offered, charity solicited, philanthropy preached, potions purveyed. No two of these incarnations appear together simultaneously; instead they follow each other in seriation, a parade "the most extraordinary metaphysical scamps" (164).

Melville's multifaceted Mississippi River sharper "manifests the traditional behavior of the devil," as Kevin J. Hayes explains. "Though the Confidence Man exemplifies centuries-old devil lore, he also reflects a new development in modern American culture" (Hayes 2007: 83). The passengers on board a riverboat, Hayes argues, are more susceptible to "the Confidence Man's spiel" because they are "rootless," but also because of the close quarters of the ship itself; they have nowhere else to go. Furthermore, writes Nathaniel Lewis, "The setting—the Mississippi River—is an unfixed, liminal space, both West and not West" (2007: 30). The passengers of the good ship are in-between and in transit, acutely subject to The Devil's devious disguises and all the more likely "to sign their names in his book" (Hayes 2007: 83).

Melville's third-person narrator playfully tracks the comings and goings with wry asides and sly double-meanings. Each manifestation of the archfiend attempts to enlarge his fellow traveler's sense of trust, optimism, faith—in a word, Confidence. The Confidence-Man, in whatever garb and role, traffics in confidence; all of the elixirs, stock-shares, and services tendered in his various incarnations boil down to confidence. After swindling a passenger from Missouri, the smooth-tongued Philosophical Intelligence Officer explains the importance of this key term. "'Confidence is the indispensable basis of all sorts of business transactions. Without it, commerce between man and man, as between country and country, would, like a watch, run down and stop'" (1990: 155). Here, Melville directly connects "confidence" with business "of all sorts," concluding his economic lesson with diabolical associations, as the Philosophical Intelligence Officer, "glancing shoreward, towards a grotesquely-shaped bluff," takes his leave: "'there's the Devil's Joke, as they call it; the bell for landing will shortly ring.'" Ashore he goes, soon to be replaced by another version of "the stranger" (a word used with great frequency). As he does throughout the novel, Melville insinuates something devilish into this doctrine of confidence. Here it is a landform bearing the name, a common enough occurrence along the Mississippi; elsewhere it is explicit reference to Satan, or allusions to snakes, or other hints to put readers in mind of the Original Tempter.

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In his most sustained incarnation, a portion that occupies roughly half the book, The Devil takes the form of a philanthropic "Cosmopolitan." Whereas Thorpe used that term to celebrate the wide array of human types brought together on a Mississippi riverboat, Melville's use of cosmopolitan also signifies the worldly Man about Town, someone familiar with and comfortable in all countries and climes. The Cosmopolitan Confidence-Man is a peculiar philanthropist, one who does indeed "love" mankind—but as a predator loves its prey. And on board the *Fidèle* he has a cross-section of Americans for his pursuits. Here again the steamboat represents the nation in microcosm. Just as the Mississippi, "uniting the streams of the most distant and opposite zones, pours them along, helter-skelter, in one cosmopolitan and confident tide," the steamboat assembles "a piebald parliament [...] of that multiform pilgrim species, man" (1990: 14). What does it mean that The Devil appears among these pilgrims as *the* Cosmopolitan, preaching Confidence aboard a steamboat named after Faith, consisting of an incongruous "congress" (14) of men and women, on a river the narrator has described as bearing its own confident cosmopolitanism?

Possible responses to this question—and I emphasize "possible" here, for the novel is awash in "perhaps," "maybe," and ambiguity—involve Melville's association of the riverboat with the state of the nation, his concern with ways of knowing, and his approach to literature. He artfully utilizes the physical nature of the steamboat, with its ample carrying-capacity and many different subsections, allowing for scenes both private and public. We never see the captain, pilot, or engineer, as if the *Fidèle* were controlled by mysterious forces. Melville also avails himself of the physical nature of the voyage, its great length, which connects one distinct part of the country with another, and its frequent and often chaotic stops at landings: "Though her voyage of twelve hundred miles extends from apple to orange, from clime to clime, yet, like any small ferry-boat, to right and left, at every landing, the huge *Fidèle* still receives additional passengers in exchange for those that disembark"; the faithful steamboat, "always full of strangers," continuously "adds to, or replaces them with strangers still more strange" (1990: 13). Like the nation, the steamboat functions

as a vessel of unwonted juxtapositions; Melville's antebellum US consists of strangers in a strange nutshell. His narrator tells readers a little about where the passengers are from but nothing about where they're going—forward for sure, south in general, and New Orleans perhaps, "into the heart of democracy's darkness in the late 1850s" (Lewis 2007: 31).

The conditions under which they travel make it difficult for passengers to know what's what. At its most basic level, the confidence solicited by the Confidence-Man is a form of unquestioning acceptance. The Devil, always "softly sliding nearer," sibilantly seeks the victim's trust, whispering seductively, "simply have confidence in *me*" (1990: 36). Since few, however, would knowingly put their faith in Satan, the Confidence-Man fixes his victim's focus on other facets of fidelity: faith in human nature, in progress, in commerce, in Charity—faith, most of all, in faith. All of these customarily benign beliefs are manipulated into fundamental fidelity to The Devil, which ultimately entails faith in a limited system of viewing the world. Confidence, as purveyed by Melville's Confidence-Man, means foregoing any and all doubt. The pact with this devil requires that Americans trade away uncertainties, suspicions, and questions; in return, they receive clarity, satisfaction, and firm answers about which we no longer have to think. The "knowledge" to be gained, however, is but "The Devil's Joke" in another form, for victims find themselves subject to their own pliable drives. Writing recently in *The Nation* about the novel as a primer for the current political climate, Ariel Dorfman understands *The Confidence-Man* as Melville's "bitter indictment" of 1850s greed and gullibility: "The author saw the United States, diseased with false innocence and a ravenous desire for getting rich, heading toward Apocalypse […]" (Dorfman 2017). The devious demon accomplishes his designs if his patsies only *believe*: In _____ we trust.

Melville's river-trip portrays different responses to these malevolent machinations, ultimately encouraging readers to assume a different attitude towards apparent opposites and seemingly clear-cut choices such as confidence and distrust, evil and good, "looks" and "facts" (1990: 20). Some passengers offer no resistance, others try to resist but fail; and while a few passengers manage to fend off The Devil successfully, the narrator depicts their

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ways and means in a not altogether favorable light. The victims may be gullible dupes, but those who withstand temptation are described as unsatisfied skeptics. A backwoods philosopher, a mystical Transcendentalist, a pragmatic barber all expose vagaries in the Confidence-Man's discourse and occasionally link him directly to The Devil, but they only seem to believe in unbelief and trust in distrust. Neither the cheerful and charming villains nor the comically cold knights-errant offer appealing positions. The foggy and muddy Mississippi, the cosmopolitan and chaotic *Fidèle*, the multiple guises and wily ways of the titular character, the negating negations and parade of "perhaps" employed by the narrator—the unaccounted ambiguities of *The Confidence-Man* prevent readers from adopting a firm and unquestioning stance about the book's general meaning.

The challenging obscurity of the novel belongs to Melville's larger philosophy of literature and interpretation, a subject as integral to the book as steamboats, the river, or the nation. With numerous references to and even extended commentary on other literary works and figures (especially Shakespeare), the novel makes writing and reading crucial topics of discussion. There are many faulty readers aboard the *Fidèle*, chief among them being the Confidence-Man, who in his various guises often excoriates literature; and though he appropriates Biblical passages for his machinations, he proves (perhaps unsurprisingly) to have not read the Good Book as a whole very carefully. The literariness of the novel is enhanced by the story's steamboat setting; the incomplete voyage of a multi-chambered vessel gives readers the sense of an on-going affair while focusing our attention on the peculiar doings of each section of the boat, the various rooms and passages offering a strategic location for the Confidence-Man's ministrations and multivalent discussions of literary endeavors. On deck, "slowly sliding along the rail," the arch-conniver decries the "moral poison" of Tacitus and the classics (1990: 34); on the floor of the cabin unread copies of a Wordsworthian ode pile up like dust bunnies; in the bar, over port wine, a lengthy debate ensues over the upshot of Shakespeare's shady Polonius; in the dimly lit "gentlemen's cabin" (284), the Cosmopolitan and a pious old man ruminate on the Books of Apocrypha, amid catcalls from a disembodied, hidden voice,

as "the waning light expired" (298). On the last page, The Devil leads the old man away, into the darkness, and the *Fidèle* sails on down the river, the final line hinting at a sequel: "Something further may follow of this Masquerade" (298).

Melville leaves the question of what might ensue to the reader's imagination, a subtle reminder of the responsibilities of interpretation. More emphatic reminders occur throughout the novel, moments in which Melville's narrator turns directly to the reader, commenting on the novel itself and its possible reception. Three chapters in particular highlight the necessity of responsible interpretation, evident in their very titles. The last of these, Chapter 44, combines literary self-referentiality with a dry observation on the interpreter's role: "IN WHICH THE LAST THREE WORDS OF THE LAST CHAPTER ARE MADE THE TEXT OF DISCOURSE, WHICH WILL BE SURE OF RECEIVING MORE OR LESS ATTENTION FROM THOSE READERS WHO DO NOT SKIP IT." Here, Melville refers to and comments on the previous chapter, stepping out of the flow of the story and drawing attention to a particular phrase—"QUITE AN ORIGINAL," a repeated reference to the devilish Cosmopolitan. In this example of meta-fictional self-reference, the writer jokingly challenges readers to pay better attention, at least for one moment, than they might customarily do. The narrator stands at a remove from the narrative flow and gives readers instead "a dissertation bordering upon the prosy, perhaps upon the smoky." The smoke here, the narrator suggests, comes not from the steamer's stacks but from the abstruse nature of meta-fictional commentary. The two sources of smoke mingle, however, significantly obscuring this particular moment. The narrator concludes that "the best use the smoke can be turned to, will be, by retiring under cover of it, in good trim as may be, to the story" (1990: 283)—that is, returning to the narrative, which is, as we have seen, sufficiently obscure in its own right. The chapter directs readers' attention once more to the nature of literature and their own role in making it worth the while.

Literary "worth" comes to the fore in the other two self-referential chapters. The second of these, Chapter 33, refers directly to the first, a double self-reference that reinforces literary (or even meta-literary) commentary as an important thread

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in the fabric of the text. "WHICH MAY PASS FOR WHATEVER IT MAY PROVE WORTH" links the working of fiction to the function of religion, and proposes that literature allows us to "turn, for a time, to something different" by "present[ing] another world" (1990: 216), providing imaginative readers with alternative ways of thinking about their circumstances. In the first of these meta-literary moments, "WORTH THE CONSIDERATION OF THOSE TO WHOM IT MAY PROVE WORTH CONSIDERING," Melville chastises his reader for expecting consistency of character in story-telling; such expectations, "though at first blush, seeming reasonable enough, may, upon a closer view, prove not much so" (84). The world is perplexingly inconsistent, he explains, and proposes that both writers and readers attend more to truth than to clarity: the complex ways of "human nature," for example, cannot simply be represented "in a clear light" (85).

The drift of this passage (and others like it), expressed by a narrator who has removed himself momentarily from the steamboat as it floats down the river, calls into question those cut-and-dried worldviews and master narratives that purport to offer clarity on "nature" (understood variously). With this dubious tack and other elements of the fictional voyage of the ship of faith, Melville presents literature as a "tangled web" that has "worth" because it more faithfully represents the tangled web of a world that we inhabit. The steamboat is a well-chosen setting for such a presentation: no one is at home, in a technical sense; all are under way. All aboard are strangers, representative of the human condition on a larger scale: "'indeed, where in this strange universe is not one a stranger?'" observes a character parenthetically (1990: 232). The Devil's Joke, in *The Confidence-Man*, is not only a riverside landmark but a dark and diabolical twisting of the limits of human nature. The more firmly we believe, the more in danger we are of being led astray. The greater clarity with which we believe we see, the likelier we're not looking very carefully. Literature, for Melville, can estrange us from received dogma and prevailing views, encouraging us to think again.

Decades before Twain's *Life on the Mississippi*, Melville used the steamboats on the river to explore the part that literature might play in improving the intellectual climate of the day. While Twain

would take interest in the mud churned up by steamboats, as well as the problems of reading the river posed by overly scientific or romantic views of it, Melville reveled in the billowing steam and smoke that envelopes the *Fidèle*, obscuring ways of knowing. More recently, the philosopher Kathleen Dean Moore, in her own writing about rivers and obscurity, asserts that there are at least two kinds of clarity: the modern and the ancient. Whereas modern clarity is "transparent, free of dimness or blurring that can obscure vision, free of confusion or doubt that can cloud thought," the ancient form carries the sense of the ringing of a bell, and meant "lustrous, splendid, radiating light" (Moore 1996: 174). My theory is that the frequent appearance of devils in US steamboat writing of the nineteenth century comes from the nation's acceptance of, striving for, and lingering doubts concerning the modern sense of clarity, even regarding such matters as progress and faith. Writers such as Herman Melville, however, resonated with the bell of the steamboat, peered through the smoke, and tried to connect readers with the rich (if often disturbing) significance of the decks and cabins, the landings and the river. Literature allows us to consider the ambiguity of clarity, to face up to uncertainty, and to confront our devils, unsummoned or no.

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WORKING LIVES ON THE MISSISSIPPI AND VOLGA RIVERS

Nineteenth-Century Perspectives

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By the early nineteenth century, the Volga and Mississippi Rivers were enclosed within the national boundaries of Russia and the United States, respectively[1]. In addition to being national rivers—exempt from the transboundary issues that characterize other major rivers—the rivers share several physical characteristics. Part of the world's major river systems, both are similar in length as the Volga begins at the Valdai Hills, located above Moscow, and courses through a diverse Russian landscape for 2,193 miles before discharging into the Caspian Sea. The Mississippi's headwaters can be found at Lake Itasca in northern Minnesota, where the river begins its 2,350-mile descent until finally reaching the Gulf of Mexico. The Volga River is the longest river in Europe, while its largest tributary to the East, the Kama, is longer than the Volga. The Mississippi is the second longest in North America with its major tributary, the Missouri River, which is the longest, extending an additional one-hundred miles. Both the Volga and Mississippi, due to their lengths, are surrounded by varying landscapes. In the case of the Mississippi, after leaving the headwaters, the river is soon surrounded by imposing bluffs that dominate the Upper Mississippi before expanding into the rich Yazoo Delta and finally weaving through the bayous and swamps of the Lower Missis-

1. Edited portions of this essay originally appeared in an earlier essay by the author, "African Americans and the Mississippi River: Race, History and the Environment" (2019).

sippi Valley. Forested landscapes line the Upper Volga before the river widens and nurtures the expansive steppe lands and finally ends with the Astrakhan delta lands.

In addition to distinct landscapes, the rivers are physically very different rivers—the Mississippi is known for its unpredictability and frequently shifting riverbanks, its rapid currents and sheer volume of water, all of which pose a challenge to navigation. In contrast, the Volga, affectionately known as *Matrushka Volga* (Mother Volga)—implying a gentler stream—while expansive and wide hindered travel through its shallows, testing those transporting goods. Despite differences, the Volga and Mississippi Rivers informed riverine cultures that shaped a nationalist ethos in the emergent nation states of Russia and the US during the nineteenth century. For each river, the unique landscapes became proof of the nation's exceptionalism, shaping a nationalism that prevailed in the politics of western nations. Poets, artists, and writers extolled the beauty of the Volga and Mississippi Rivers; framing their praise in nationalist rhetoric. According to one historian, by the early 1800s, when Americans determined "to establish a national culture" they looked to "the landscapes of America as the basis." (Sears, 1994:4). For example, in the US, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow captured American sentiment in his famous poem, "Evangeline" (1847). In one well-known stanza, describing Evangeline's descent down the river, Longfellow wrote: "It was the month of May. Far down the Beautiful River, / Past the Ohio shore and past the mouth of the Wabash, / Into the golden stream of the broad and swift Mississippi" (Longfellow, lines 741–743). Scenery unique to Russia or the United States represented an alternative to other scenic vistas such as the long-revered European Alps. Or in the case of Russia, the poet Constantin Balmont immortalized the Volga's place in Russian history, comparing the Volga to other classic rivers.

> Water is a mirror of beauty that is eternally created in our inexhaustible, inexhaustible universe. And glory to the country that has found a mighty river for its face. There is no Egypt without the Nile, there is no India without the Ganges, there is Russia among the greatest and most beautiful countries, because it has the Volga. (Balmont)

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As steamboats replaced the bulky flatboats, travel on the rivers increased as tourists experienced their national rivers, rhapsodizing upon the beauty found in each. For example, the Mississippi was captured in the following praise from one well-heeled traveler in 1855:

> The trip up the Mississippi to St. Paul [...] was unalloyed enjoyment [...] It is, indeed, a panorama of unequalled yet ever-varying beauty, and the world may be safely challenged to show its like. The "Father of Waters" has no peer among all the mighty rivers which furrow the surface of the globe. (qtd. in Busch, et al. 2004: 12)

The Volga received equal praise, such as the following penned by Russian journalist Vasilii Nemirovich-Danchenko in 1877: "The Volga is an endless poetic song, an endless epic poem. Nature is such a poet and artist that [the Volga] only has especially striking places and no prosaic details" (Ely 2003: 674). Thus, for many living during these times (and subsequent generations), a narrative emerged valorizing the Mississippi and Volga Rivers, seeing in each river a unique beauty, a contribution to a national epic and becoming the lens through which major rivers were perceived.[2]

Concomitant with the celebratory aspects of each river were the long-standing practical roles each played in the economies of the US and Russia. As a national river, the Volga with its two major tributaries, the Oka and Kama, served as Russia's economic highway and one of the principal means for Russian commercial success beginning with Ivan IV (the Terrible) and his expulsion of the Mongols in 1552. The river gained importance under Peter the Great in the eighteenth century when he moved the capital to St. Petersburg, prompting construction of canals to link the capital with the Volga and its commerce. As Russian merchants dominated the Volga, the riverfront cities of Nizhnii

2. The literature on landscape in the context of nationalism is a growing field. Several scholars who explore riverine landscapes or "riverscapes" and their influence on the national narrative include Tricia Cusack, *Riverscapes and National Identity* (2010, 2019); Peter Coates, *A Story of Six Rivers: History, Culture and Ecology* (2013). For works that explore the Volga and Mississippi Rivers, see Christopher Ely in *This Meager Nature Landscape and National Identity in Imperial Russia* (2002); Thomas Ruys Smith, *Imagining the Mississippi River Before Mark Twain* (2007).

Novgorod, Iaroslavl, Astrakhan, and Rybinsk became the principal trading centers enabling Russian trade to the East and Europe. Some of the most valued commercial goods transported by boat on the Volga included Russian furs, salt, grain, timber, hemp and iron. By 1830, almost 24,000 ships travelled the Volga. (Vinogradov 2015) Further nineteenth century estimates, testifying to a robust economy, documented that merchants in the most popular trading city, Nizhnii Novgorod, located at the confluence of the Oka and Volga Rivers, realized a revenue of thirty million rubles. Nizhnii Novgorod hosted an annual trade fair that became the largest in Europe.[3]

For the Mississippi River, merchants in the southern states bordering the river experienced unprecedented growth in the nineteenth century facilitated by the nation's major transportation artery and its two major tributaries, the Ohio and Missouri Rivers. With the arrival of steam in 1811, paired with an increase in cotton production, the river supported one of the richest economies in the world. Put another way, in the early 1800s, an estimated 5 million pounds of cotton were shipped from the Mississippi Valley compared to 200 million pounds by the 1830s. The city of New Orleans, which had grown almost ten times since 1810, became one of the busiest ports in the US as southern cotton fed the British textile industry. By 1860, steam traffic on the river was robust as over 3,500 boats arrived at the New Orleans levee annually, compared to twenty barges in 1817. For both rivers, "improvements" that would enhance commerce were continuous throughout the nineteenth century. While the Volga underwent ongoing improvements through the construction of canals linking major Russian cities with the East and West, the Mississippi River

3. For further discussion regarding Imperial Russia's use of the Volga River in the transport of commodities, see Robert E. Jones, *Bread Upon the Waters: The St. Petersburg Grain Trade and the Russian Economy, 1703–1811* (2003). The hydrology of the Volga River, particularly around the area of Nizhnii Novgorod, is considered by Catherine Evtuhov in *Portrait of Russian Province: Economy Society, and Civilization in Nineteenth-Century Nizhnii Novgorod* (2011). Etuhov's work is well-known for its characterization of Russian provincial life apart from a Soviet Union context. The Volga River and the annual trade fair at Nizhnii Novgorod played significant roles in her portrayal of an active, enterprising province.

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was buffeted by two-thousand miles of levees before the Civil War to improve navigation and deter flooding. Both rivers served utilitarian roles, facilitating the transformation of Russia and the US into modern nation states. Even with the advent of the railroad, the Volga and Mississippi Rivers remained integral to the economic health of each country as the principal arteries for the internal movement of goods for most of the nineteenth century.[4]

Often overlooked in the abstract retelling of each river's revered place in the national discourse or in the pragmatic statistics of an economist, however, are the stories and folklore of laborers who produced the robust economies and shaped the imagery of each river. Unlike the cultural merchants of the nineteenth century who marketed the aesthetic attributes of each river, those laboring on the river possessed a multi-dimensional understanding of the river. They depicted a river that might be demanding and nurturing while also aesthetically pleasing. For example, the burlaki or barge haulers in Russia, portrayed through song a Volga River that was a harsh taskmaster. In one of their songs, they pleaded with the river to ease their suffering.

Volga, my little mother, Russian river,
spare the strength of a barge hauler, my dear!
Ekh, my legs are tired, the strap is tight on my chest,
order the wind to blow, my dear [...]
Volga, my little mother, sorrowful river, my benefactress,
don't forget an old burlaki. (Ziolkowski 2020)

For African Americans working on the Mississippi River during the nineteenth century, their songs also depicted a river that was exacting. In the "Roustabout Holler," two of the refrains lamented.

4. For an early history of commerce on the Mississippi River, see E.W. Gould's *Fifty Years on the Mississippi or Gould's History of River Navigation* (1889). In recent years, scholars have revisited the institution of slavery in the context of global capitalism. Their findings indicate that the cotton industry in the Mississippi River Valley was a very lucrative market that contributed to the South's emergence as one of the profitable capitalist economies in the nineteenth century. Slave labor facilitated the South's economic successes. See Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (2013); Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (2014); Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (2014).

Oh, Po' roust-a-bout don't have no home
Makes his livin' on his shoulder bone.
If yo' shoulder bone gits so' this time,
Git you a little sody an' turpentine.
I left my home in '84,
And I ain't never been dere no more.
Oh-h-h-h
Po' roustabout don't have no home,
Here today and tomorrow gone. (Botkin 1955: 571–572)

In both instances, the intersection of labor and the environment, specifically rivers, resulted in perceptions that differed significantly from those of nineteenth century travelers, writers, poets and artists. Working on the river produced mixed responses; alternating from the reverential, to resentful to wary. For example, in another popular Russian barge hauler song, "Dubinushka" or "Little Club," the men sung these lines in time to moving the barges. (The song began as a song related to the forest but the burlaki adapted it to describe their labor and sung it in time to moving the barges.)

Yo, heave ho, heave ho!
We will uproot the birch tree, we will uproot the leafy tree [...]
We go along the shore, we sing a song to the sun [...]
Hey, hey, pull the rope harder!
We sing our song to the sun [...]
Oh you, Volga, mother river, wide and deep [...]
Oh, you who are dearer than everything to us, Volga, Volga, mother river.
(Zeisler-Vralsted, 2014: 67–68)

Black men and women, with a rich history that included references to rivers as liberators, had similar songs that could be applied to the Mississippi or its tributary, the Ohio River, such as 'Crossing Over Jordan,' 'The Old Ship of Zion,' or 'Down by the Riverside.'[5]

5. The connection between music and/or slave spirituals and the Mississippi River has been studied by numerous scholars, including Catherine Gooch *"I've Known Rivers:" Representations of the Mississippi River in African American Literature and Culture* (2019); Shane White and Graham White, *The Sounds of Slavery: Discovering African American History through Songs, Sermons, and Speech*. (2005); Jon F. Sensbach, "'The Singing of the Mississippi': The River and Religions of the Black Atlantic" (2013). In his discussion of the spiritual, "Down by the Riverside," Sensbach contended that although the spiritual was sung in other geographical regions, "the song distills the notion of the con-

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but regardless which characterization of the rivers dominated, for the burlaki and African Americans their initial experiences were mediated through their labor.

River laborers, however, were not the only social group for which labor was the linkage to their environment. In a relatively new sub-field, scholars reflect upon the role that labor serves in environmental and labor history. Richard White set the stage by encouraging environmental historians to "reexamine the connections between work and nature" (White 1996: 171) And in White's classic, *The Organic Machine*, which traced the history of the Columbia River, he looked at how energy tied humans and the river together. In his history of the first explorers to the Columbia, trying to navigate upstream, he observed how they experienced the river through the energy they expended. This aspect of White's book, in particular, paralleled the experience of the barge haulers (White 1996). Since White's work, there have been others including Gunther Peck's analytical work in finding commonalities between labor and environmental history (Peck 2006). Adding to the field is Chad Montrie's anthology of scholars examining the linkages between labor and the environment in the US from the times of slavery to the twentieth century—although in each of his selections, the workers "confronted an industrial transition" (Montrie, 2008: 8). In Stefania Barca's article in *The Journal of Environmental History,* she identified three junctures where work and nature intersected and offered some "possible new paths of investigation" for environmental history (Barca 2014: 3). Barca's most relevant study, however, where comparisons to the work performed by barge haulers and African Americans can be drawn, was her 2018 article on the "ecology of labor." In this article, she concluded that "ecological consciousness, in general, is also a diversified experience, fundamentally mediated by labour and class." Still, the main concerns of recent scholarship, examining the relationship between work and the environment, is how the arrival of industrial capitalism with its wage labor class alienated workers from nature.

Yet there are a few scholars that offer different insights including Cheryl Dyl's work on hoboes. Although Dyl looked

stant, intertwined presence of water and Jesus, and the Mississippi River was the omnipresent water in the lives of thousands" (31).

at their lives within the context of industrial capitalism, she went beyond this frame as she demonstrated that hoboes expressed an appreciation of the wilderness. Dyl's convincing scholarship challenged Roderick Nash's critique that "lumberman, miners, and professional hunters […] lived too close to nature to appreciate it for other than its economic value as raw material" (Dyl 2014: 99). Applying Dyl's observations, the hoboes' experiences corresponded with that of the barge haulers and African Americans as both were marginalized groups. The barge haulers, in particular, endowed the Volga with qualities apart from the physical environment, recognizing its strength and nurturing qualities. Dyl's work is also of comparative value in that, like the hoboes, African Americans and barge haulers "viscerally experienced outdoor living and the vagaries of climate" (Dyl 2014: 98). but the most significant exception in this relatively new area of scholarship and one that corresponded with the experiences of African Americans and Russian barge haulers was Thomas G. Andrews' work, *Killing for Coal,* in which he traced the history of the 1914 Ludlow Massacre and the "Great Coalfield War" with an in-depth look at the lives of the colliers. By studying this group of laborers and the subculture that developed as a result of the work they performed underground, Andrews outlined a new framework for environmental historians. He coined the term "workscape" as opposed to landscape, defining a workscape as "something more complex: not just an essentially static scene or setting neatly contained within borders, but a constellation of unruly and ever-unfolding relationships—not simply land, but also air and water, bodies and organisms, as well as the language people use to understand the world, and the lens of culture through which they make sense of and act on their surroundings" (125). By looking at the colliers' experiences through workscapes, Andrews blurred the artificial distinction between humans and nature and instead showed how each influenced the other. Andrews' work also allowed scholars to go beyond the tendency to look at pre-industrial labor's relationship as one that simply emphasized sustainability or at best, traditional ecological knowledge. but whether in the context of industrial capitalism or Andrews' workscapes, all these environmental historians agreed that

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the relationship between labor and the environment invites new ways of understanding the dialectic between humans and nature and warrants study (125).

Adding to the literature is the complex world of those who labored on the Mississippi and Volga. River laborers, like the colliers, created a waterscape that was all encompassing. For the burlaki and African Americans, life on the Volga and Mississippi Rivers produced subcultures that reflected their kinship with the rivers. Similar to Dyl's hoboes, they "viscerally experienced" their environment–an important distinction from their contemporaries, such as the tourist, steamboat pilot, merchant or plantation owners. For the river laborer, their intimacy with the river, derived from demanding, often brutal work cultivated an "ecological consciousness," informing a subculture that produced a rich repository of song and folklore. Thus, for laboring African Americans and barge haulers, the Mississippi and Volga Rivers emerged in a variety of roles–taskmasters, nurturers, enslavers, and liberators. but work on the rivers also resulted in cultures bound by different norms than those of the traveler, artist or writer. First and foremost, however, for free and enslaved black men and women, the river represented the journey into the bowels of slavery in the Deep South. While this imagery predominated, the river also signified a liberating influence. For example, for African Americans working on steamboats, their lives were often less circumscribed than those enslaved on the plantations and under the watch of an overseer. Court cases and popular accounts from nineteenth-century records in the middle Mississippi River Valley indicate that the area offered mobility to many of the enslaved. The same forces that enslaved, namely a robust market economy and Mississippi River transport, also allowed for a greater degree of freedom for black men and women. In the words of one scholar, "River-centric commerce facilitated by the steamboats that ran the Mississippi River and its tributaries not only shaped women's experiences in the river valleys, it also provided them with the opportunities to pursue freedom for themselves through river work" (Hines 2018: 103). Also, work on the steamboats allowed for greater communication among black communities; another venue to carry news from one area

to another.[6] For the burlaki, seasonal work on the Volga produced a subculture with its own folklore, poetry, song and even vocabulary. At times, the burlaki were portrayed enjoying a life free from convention, while other depictions showed a lazy, dissolute underclass. Within each group—African Americans and the barge haulers—their perceptions of the rivers reflected a complexity often missing in other texts. Much like Dyl's discussion of twentieth century hoboes in the US, both groups attributed several roles to the rivers. The rivers were demanding yet nurturing, confining yet liberating. In contrast, in 1863 Mark Twain lamented that once he knew the river as a steamboat pilot, his appreciation of the river's beauty had diminished. In his words, "Now when I had mastered the language of this water and had come to know every trifling feature that bordered the great river […] I had made a valuable acquisition. but I had lost something, too… All the grace, the beauty, the poetry had gone out of the majestic river!" (2001: 54). He elaborated further by writing that, while a sunset that would have once filled him with awe, now indicated "we are going to have wind tomorrow; that floating log means that the river is rising, small thanks to it; that slanting mark on the water refers to a bluff reef which is going to kill somebody's steamboat one

6. In *Black Life on the Mississippi: Slaves, Free Blacks, and the Western Steamboat World* (2004), Thomas C. Buchanan argues that work on Mississippi River steamboats allowed for more mobility and opportunities for escape for the enslaved. In Gooch's 2018 dissertation (cited above), she challenged his conclusions and concluded that "While it seemed that access to the river would offer the chance at escape—or at least improve the conditions of slavery—this was rarely the case" (36). For support of Buchanan's work, however, consult John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (1999). In their review of runaway advertisements, they cited numerous instances in which slaveholders warned that runaway bondspersons would attempt to reach the river. Also supporting Buchanan's thesis is a recent dissertation by Alicia Hines, in which she looked at court records, newspapers and other primary sources from the Middle Mississippi Valley region and found that the evolving capitalist economy of the nineteenth century exposed black women to the legal possibilities of attaining freedom. In river cities, such as St. Louis, black women were exposed to contemporary ideas, people and public spaces which facilitated increased opportunities for economic mobility and in some cases, freedom. See Hines, *Geographies of Freedom: Black Women's Mobility and the Making of the Western River World* (2018).

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of these nights, if it keeps on stretching out like that" (2001: 55). In Twain's remarks, perceptions were divided by the constructed boundaries of the aesthetic and pragmatic. For those marginalized laborers on the river, the distinctions were absent. Regardless which imagery is the most convincing, the remnants of the past expressed through song and folklore are another way of knowing a river that deserves a place in history texts, contributing further to an ecology of labor, where class and race inform consciousness.

Beginning with the barge haulers, by the early nineteenth century, they would be common fixtures in towns along the Volga River. As Russia's economy grew, so did the labor force, and by 1815, there were 400,000 burlaki on the Volga. By 1822, the governor of Nizhnii Novgorod, a city wholly dependent upon Volga River commerce, stated there were 652,000 burlaki (Ziolkowski 2020: 110). The labor force grew, in part, because of additional financial burdens Russian peasants faced. Their taxes had increased from two rubles in the mid-eighteenth century to seven rubles by the end of the century, forcing many to leave their homes and seek seasonal work. The practice became so commonplace that a Russian proverb evolved, "To pay a debt, go to the river Volga to become a barge-hauler" (Vinogradov, n.d.). but the increasing number of barge haulers also reflected a strong Russian economy in which goods, particularly grain, was shipped in large amounts upriver to Nizhnii Novgorod and from there to other Russian cities. With the increase in taxes, the labor force changed and by the nineteenth century burlaki were drawn from all over Russia. Most claimed Russian origins although there were also Kazan and Simbirsk Tatar men (Bogolyubov 2015). Within Russia, the Penza province supplied the most barge-haulers and the Volga River absorbed most of this labor force, although barge haulers worked on other Russian Rivers, such as the Don. Within barge haulers' circles, they had nicknames for those coming from different provinces, an indication of the world they created. For the burlaki coming from the village of Reshm and the Kostroma province, they were referred to as *ahseen-ovi pyest*, loosely meaning "aspen pest." Or, for those from the Vladimir province, they were nicknamed *star-o-doob* or a "star-borer." There were other names, of course, distinguishing a burlaki's home village or province. Geographically

derived nicknames were only one aspect of an emerging vocabulary derived from burlaki vocabulary. According to one scholar who compiled the Russian Volga Dictionary, he found "400 words identified as 'burlatskie'" (Vinogradov 2015). For example, barge haulers assigned nicknames to each other reflecting a personal characteristic or incident, illustrating the close-knit community they formed. In one instance, a former barge hauler was nicknamed Besheny, meaning frantic because at the end of the day's route when everyone else was resting, he was still doing a lot of physical activities such as swimming across the Volga, or climbing a pine tree. Another burlak's nickname was Ulan, because once he and his friends robbed three men on the road near Kazan. One of their prizes was a leather box which he expected to hold something of value. Instead, all that was inside was an uhlan helmet, hence his nickname. Stories such as these, grounded in the folklore of past generations, testified to a well-established subculture (Vinogradov 2015).

But the intersection of labor and the environment also prompted a rich vocabulary to describe the everyday tasks of the barge hauler. Within the subculture, on the days when the main job was "to pull the strap"—the work most associated with the barge haulers—they worked from dawn to dusk. The term implied hard labor and has survived in contemporary times as today "pulling the strap" means "It's a constant grind" (Gilyarovsky 2018). Portrayed in numerous mediums, the act of pulling the boat with straps around their chests, was best captured by Ilya Repin. In his famous work, "Barge Haulers on the Volga" (1873), Repin succeeded in depicting the barge haulers' world on several levels. He conveyed the enormity of the task, and the amount of physical exertion and tedium required in moving the barges. but Repin also evoked the complexity of the barge haulers. With his careful portrayal, Repin depicted an impoverished but inscrutable, proud working class of men. While Repin's representation was flattering, less flattering images of the burlaki co-existed in the Russian collective memory throughout the periods of Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union. Yet, Repin's imagery of a demanding, harsh environment was supported by numerous travel accounts documenting the challenges the burlaki encountered. One Volga River

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constant was the uneven stream flow and frequent shallow places. In the recollections of a late seventeenth century traveler, one day the shallow spots were so numerous, the barge only moved a half league. On this day, all he heard were orders to "Pull! Row! Back!" (Nikitin 1985: 301).

For larger ships, when pulling the barges, the burlaki walked on a path, known as the *bechevnik*, a coastal strip alongside navigable rivers which, according to law, should remain free for all shipping needs. In pulling the boats, not only was the work of actual pulling onerous but the paths were often described in the following way "The shoreline of the mountain side passes either along the slopes and peaks of mountains and ravines, or along coastal sand and clay. In the heat the sand burns and burns their feet, and in the rain the clay dissolves and become viscous and slippery" (Vinogradov 2015). Also, as the river's high water receded with summer approaching and deadlines looming, there was always an urgency in moving the freight. In addition to low water, the threat of an early winter was ever-present. Similar to the diversity of jobs on the Mississippi River steamers, there were different types of work on the barges and, as hard as putting on the strap was, a worse job was moving the anchor. Here is one traveler's observation of this work:

> When the wind is not directly behind them, the Russians do not go under sail. Instead, they carry the anchors, one after another, a quarter of a league ahead in a small boat; then, using the bast [anchor] ropes, a hundred or more men, standing one behind another, pull the boat against the current. However, by this means they cannot go more than two leagues a day. The boats, which are flat on the bottom, can haul 400 to 500 last of freight. (Olearius 1967: 297)

Accompanying the drudgery and probably one of the best illustrations of burlaki culture and its linkages with the river were the songs they sung as they worked. Certain songs were sung for specific tasks, establishing a rhythm or step in carrying out their tasks such as dragging a ship off a shoal or struggling against the wind. Work songs were common among laboring classes and for enslaved black men and women, there were numerous songs that accompanied the work of loading freight, feeding the steamboat boilers, or rowing, to name a few. For the barge-haulers, the most

well-known song was "Dubinushka," with lyrics acknowledging the river's agency while implying an intimacy with Russia's major waterway.[7] Adding to songs were other works such as the poem written by a former barge hauler in which he lamented "Volga, you have shortened more than one life" (Ziolkowski 2020).

Further solidifying burlaki culture were the *artels*; loosely defined as labor collectives. In a recent dissertation on the burlaki, the author stated that labor collectives "lasted every year for several months, contributing to the formation of a distinctive burlak culture, with its own folklore, burlatsk proverbs and sayings and finally its own professional vocabulary" (Vinogradov 2015). The groups or artels for each ship numbered anywhere from ten to forty people pulling from nine-hundred and one-thousand *poods* of goods (a *pood-pyd* is equal to sixteen kilograms). And for riverboats on the Middle Volga and those smaller rivers that were part of the watershed, they averaged around sixty burlaki per boat. Their journey might be from Nizhnii Novgorod to Rybinsk, for example (Jones 2015: 155). but not all burlaki were free members belonging to an *artel*. Before 1861, some were serf barge haulers (Ziolkowski 2020). Those belonging to an *artel*, however, with its sense of community, ensured the persistence of a subculture, rooted in the collective memory of song and folklore.

Another aspect of barge hauler daily life was that barge haulers often did not know how much weight they were pulling. but if they realized the weight, more bargaining regarding pay would begin as the ship owner knew it would be harder to find additional burlaki, particularly as the ship neared the upper reaches of the Volga. Given the amount of weight they had to pull, the burlaki were expected to be strong, and according to one young man who became a barge hauler in the late nineteenth century, when they questioned his ability to pull the strap, he had to demonstrate his strength by bending a coin. According to his account, "he just folded it as a 'patty' and as a result he was accepted as equal to them." (Gilyarovsky 2018). Burlaki folklore also

7. In the nineteenth century, the Russian Imperial government commissioned the Chernetsov Brothers to travel down the Volga and document Russian folklore and song for posterity, testimony to the Volga's role in the emergent national culture.

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included a story about Nikituska Lomov, who was memorialized for his ability to do the work of four men as well as stories of his protecting the less fortunate. Of course, part of his ability stemmed from his size which in subsequent stories became almost larger than life. Still another story that testified to their stamina and endurance in the face of cold is called, "The Barge Hauler's Contest with the Frost." In this famous tale, the barge hauler was compared to the nobleman who has to wear a fur coat to protect him from the elements while the burlaki wears only a short peasant's coat and no hat or gloves (Zeisler-Vralsted 2015: 67).

There was even a pageantry for the hiring of the burlaki which began in early spring once the snow started melting, freeing the river for commerce. Ship owners hurried to the markets or squares known in Russia as the "burlatskie bazary" to begin hiring. Common practices were established as the burlak signaled prospective employers of his availability by displaying a wooden spoon jutting out of his hat band, part of the traditional tall, felt hats worn by the burlaki. If he was employed, the wooden spoon was placed inside his belt. (In addition to their tall felt hats, the burlaki were also recognized by the leg-warmers and bast shoes they wore as their traditional footware.) Another indication they were looking for work would be the black crosses on the soles of their feet which would be plain to see as they slept on the embankments. All these rituals cultivated a subculture born from exacting lives on the river. Living and sleeping on the river embankments were another aspect of unconventional burlaki life and viewed by many as the absence of a conventional home that allowed for a freedom of movement not permissible for other members of their socio-economic class. but within the broader Russian collective memory, the burlaki occupied dual, competing roles—they were either portrayed as oustiders, vagabonds or through the lens of Repin where the workers were poised for social redemption (Rybinsk Burlak Museum).

Further entrenching the barge haulers' place in Russian history and adding to the imaginaries of burlaki lives was the poetry of N.A. Nekrasov. Growing up on the Volga River, Nekrasov revealed a kinship with the river, like that of poets and artists, while also seeing the ambivalence of a Russian subculture where the river

oppressed yet sustained. In one of the most famous poems about the barge haulers, "The Barge Tower," Nekrasov described their work

With shoulders back and breast astrain,
And bathed in sweat which falls like rain,
Through midday heat with gasping song,
He drags the heavy barge along.
He falls and rises with a groan,
His song now becomes a moan [...]
But now the barge at anchor lies. (2011, lines 349–355)

But in a more nuanced understanding of the river's agency and the hardships endured by the burlaki, Nekrasov also wrote.

Go out to the bank of the Volga: whose moan
Is heard about the greatest Russian river?
This groan we call a "song"-
Barge-haulers go by tow-path!
Oh Volga, Volga! Even in full-watered spring
You water the field not as much as
Great national grief overfilled our land.
Where there's a nation—there is a groan. (1976: 81)

Despite their presence and association with the Volga, by the late nineteenth century, the burlaki were becoming a cultural construct in Russian society as steam was displacing the profession. Many barge haulers, foreseeing the end of their work on the river, opposed the arrival of steamships. but ultimately for many barge haulers, like other laborers forced to find seasonal or extra work, they eventually moved into the industrializing metropolitan areas. The transition of this labor force from a river-centric economy changed village dynamics. As one scholar observed, "Peasants in villages around the Upper Volga trading towns became impoverished as they lost their seasonal jobs as pilots, bargees, and dockers" (Economakis 1997:6). Thus the advent of steam ended a rich subculture where life on the river offered a level of mobility, albeit in exchange for a demanding, often brutal existence.

In contrast to the barge haulers, whose livelihoods were displaced with the arrival of steamships, free and enslaved black men and women realized new forms of work with the arrival of steam. but another distinction between the two laboring classes was slavery and race. Although conditions for the burlaki

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were harsh and their mobility was limited through a passport system in Imperial Russia, they were not enslaved, although before 1861, serfs could be found working on the barges. Enslavement, however, framed other perceptions of the Mississippi River and its environs. For example, even before the arrival of steam, for the enslaved, the Mississippi River and its surrounding wilderness represented racialized spaces—areas where whites were absent. In the words of one scholar studying the Natchez district, "The fields and the great house were places of work and struggle. The wild places were good for worship and running away" (Kaye 2007:5). Outside the white hierarchy of domesticated landscapes, the marginalized swamps and wilderness were an arena where the enslaved had control, contributing to an autonomous slave culture. These associations persisted throughout the antebellum period, informing a cultural identity, independent of the slaveholders.[8] but the river also represented a "second middle passage," where an estimated one million enslaved blacks were transported in chains to auction blocks in river cities, including New Orleans, Louisiana and Natchez, Mississippi up to the outbreak of the Civil War. Once sold, many were sentenced to lives working on riverfront plantations—cultivating cotton or sugar cane—and building levees along with a host of other jobs. With steam-powered ships, transportation on the river improved dramatically, shortening the length of time for delivering goods through improved navigation, all factors critical to a growing, prosperous Southern economy, derived primarily from cotton. For black men and women, the changing economy increased their exposure to the river, resulting in greater numbers of enslaved while at the same time offering greater freedom and new venues of communication through laboring on the steamboats. Both African Americans and barge

8. Scholarship considering the role of alternative landscapes in the world of the enslaved is a growing field. Two notable works include *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790* (1999) by Rhys Isaac and *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (1993) by John Michael Vlach. In Vlach's work, he documented how landscapes were "reconceptualized" by the enslaved. Adding to the literature is Stephanie Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (2004). For a work that specifically examines different perspectives of swamp landscapes, see William Tynes Cowan, *The Slave in the Swamp: Disrupting the Plantation Narrative* (2005).

haulers shared the liberating aspects of river labor, associations that informed the subcultures of each.

Throughout the nineteenth century, African Americans—both free and enslaved—knew the river through work on steamboats as waiters, boilermen, and roustabouts, to name a few jobs associated with river travel. In addition to jobs connected to steam travel, was the never-ending work on the levees. Each plantation that bordered the river struggled to keep levees maintained and curtail the unpredictable Mississippi flooding. According to scholars—relying upon memoirs of former slaves and advertisements for runaways—for those where the river offered work, they experienced a greater degree of freedom than enslaved black Americans forced to labor on the land. When working on a steamboat, black men and women had the opportunity to communicate with others and the possibility for escape might be greater. Still, work on the ever-present steamboats was grueling. New tasks emerged such as getting wood, known as "wooding up," to feed the boilers and were often assigned to free and enslaved blacks. In the words of one traveler aboard a first-class steamer in 1855, sixty men might be charged with gathering one hundred cords of wood from the shore. The work was well-orchestrated:

> The laborers pursue their calling with the precision of clockwork. Upon the shoulders of each are piled up innumerable sticks of wood, which are thus carried from the land into the capacious bowels of the steamer. The "last loads" are shouldered—the last effort to carry the 'largest pile' is indulged in. (Thorpe, 1855:37)

Once the "wooding-up" was completed, an equally demanding job was insuring the boilers stayed full in order to steam the ship. This work was physically challenging on two fronts—the strength required and the intense heat from the boiler. Songs were often invoked to capture the rhythms of the work, as one European traveler recalled:

> The immense fire-engines are all on this deck, eight or nine apertures all in a row; they are like yawning fiery throats, and beside each throat stood a negro naked to his middle, who flung in fire-wood [...] The negro up aloft on the pile of fire-wood began immediately an improvised song in stanzas, and at the close of each the negroes down below joined in vigorous chorus. It was a fantastic and grand sight to see [...] while they

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[the men working the boilers] , amid their equally fantastic song, keeping time most exquisitely, hurled one piece of fire-wood after another into the yawning fiery gulf. (Bremer 1853:174)

While feeding the boilers was probably one of the worst jobs on steamships, other demanding jobs included loading and unloading freight. The men who did this were known as roustabouts. One former riverboat pilot remembered roustabouts carrying kegs of nails weighing one-hundred-seven pounds apiece for a distance of two-hundred yards. Each roustabout was expected to haul seventy-five kegs. Initially many of the roustabouts were German and Irish immigrants but after the Civil War, African Americans comprised the majority and while there is scant first--hand written experience about their lives, their lifestyles became legendary, through song and folklore, similar to the marginalized lives of the burlaki (Merrick 2015: 98). When not loading or unloading the numerous steamships traveling up and down the river, roustabouts lived in dilapidated quarters, gaining reputations for frequenting taverns in the least desirable neighborhoods such as Natchez-Under-the-Hill. Songs such as the "Drunkard's Song," reveal the uncertainty of the roustabout's life:

I went down on the levee
Waitin' for the Miss Jaie Ray.
I knowed if I don't work fer the kind captain
I can't bring my Baby no pay.
While roamin' this wide world of sorrow
No cheerin' no comfort have I
And I think uv my ole whiskey bottle,
I know I'll drink till I die. (Mary Wheeler Collection)

Another sorrowful song, like the plaintive lyrics of the barge hauler's, is the following, known by its first line, "Ohio River, She's so Deep and Wide,"

Ohio River, She's so Deep and Wide
Lord, I can't see my poor gal
From the other side
I'm goin' to river, take my seat and sit down,
If the blues overtake me, I'll jump in the river and drown.
I've go the blues, I've got the blues,
Lord, I ain't got the heart to cry. (Mary Wheeler Collection)

Songs such as these along with the work songs, such as the "Po' Roustbout," offer a glimpse into the drudgery and despair that attended the roustabouts' world.[9]

Through song, another river-related job was recalled—the brutal work of the levee camps. Before the Civil War, individual slaveowners who owned land along the river were responsible for constructing and maintaining levees. Meticulous slaveowners kept records of the enslaved working on their bordering levees with entries in accounting ledgers. Both enslaved men and women worked countless hours on antebellum levees as the river always threatened profits from the lucrative cotton crops. After the war, levee camps were established and worked by African Americans in conditions that were little better than those experienced when enslaved. The levee camps were known for their brutality where violence insured productivity. Oftentimes, there might only be three armed white supervisors directing the work of one hundred black men and women (Mizelle 2013). In one first-hand account by Big Joe Williams, he recalled working on the levees at the age of twelve:

> I left home run off to the levee camp. I was about twelve years old then. I went to a camp in Greenville, Mississippi [...] I went out there and was a willow driver. Yeah, popped lossa mules out there [...] mule driver. The life was hard. The men worked from sunrise to sunset. At night they slept in filthy tents on rotten mattresses with a couple of blankets to crawl under. The food just about kept a man alive [...] The pay was $1 to $1.50 a day and that went on Saturday-night drinking and women. (Crowley 1991: 156)

Supporting accounts such as these are the songs produced by well-known blues artists. Chronicling life on the levees was a frequent topic for blues artists with lyrics such as these from Lucille Bogan's "Levee Blues" (1927):

> Down on the levee, Camp Number Nine
> Down the levee, Camp Number Nine

9. Roustabout songs covered all aspects of steamboat life as T. Buchanan cites one roustabout song, "Roustabout's Refrain," in which black workers sing about the harsh treatment they receive from the captain. See Thomas C. Buchanan, *Black Life on the Mississippi: Slaves, Free Blacks, and the Western Steamboat World* (2004: 34).

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You can pass my house, honey you can hear me cry
I never had no blues, until I come by here
I never had no blues, until I come by here
I'm going to leave this camp, you can't start in here
My sister got the, brother got them too
We all got the levee camp blues
I ain't found no doctor, ain't no doctor in this whole round world
I ain't found no doctor, ain't no doctor in this whole round world
Just to cure the blues, the blues of a levee camp girl. (Bogan, Vol. 1)

Using songs such as these was one way to retrieve a collective memory regarding the river and how the river was perceived by African Americans. The songs illuminate a number of themes associated with the levee camps; working conditions, separation from family, violence and disorder. One of the more popular songs describing the work, "Levee Camp Blues" (1941), came from Washboard Sam:

says I worked in a levee camp just about a month ago
Says I worked in a levee camp just about a month ago
Says I wired so many wagons, it made my po' hands sore
We slept just like dogs, eat beans both night and day
We slept just like dogs, eat beans both night and day
But I never did know just when we were due our pay

They had two shifts on day and the same two shifts at night
They had two shifts on day and the same two shifts at night
But if a man wired wagons, he can't feed his baby right
Yeah boy, wind it now, wind it
Electric lights going out, telephone is bogging down
Electric lights going out, telephone is bogging down
I'm going to keep on winding because I'm the best old winder in town.

Thus, Mississippi River levees became a constant in the collective memory of African Americans as the Corps of Engineers committed to an engineering strategy whereby levees continued to be built, corseting the river, in the belief the Mississippi River could be contained. Twentieth and twenty-first century floods, such as the Great Flood of 1927 and the after-effects of Hurricane Katrina, exposed this fallacy but not before many African Americans lost their lives and/or their livelihoods. In the 1927 flood, the unofficial death toll reached one-thousand. Of those one-thousand, at least one-hundred African American men drowned on the night National Guard troops forced them to remain at the Mounds Bayou levee

in a last-ditch effort to save the levee. For Hurricane Katrina, the death toll reached almost 2000 with disproportionate losses in African American communities.[10]

Adding to the memories of levee work were the post-Civil War years of sharecropping in the Mississippi Valley. In a system akin to peonage, African Americans leased farmland from the planters with the rent repaid through the sale of their crops. For the sharecroppers, their debt load always outweighed potential profits. Often consigned to cultivate the valley bottomlands, African Americans saw their lands flooded first, forcing them deeper into debt. When the Great Flood of 1927 occurred, many did not see any hope of recovery, prompting a major migration to the North. Although provoked by economic losses, the migration North was also liberating for those African Americans who left the Jim Crow South. Subsequently, for African Americans, when faced with catastrophic disasters such as the Mississippi floods and storm surges, the narrative that emerges is laced with displacement, economic ruin and resilience. Twentieth-century blues music continued to be the repository in which these themes and emotions were remembered as the genre expanded with songs lamenting the 1927 flood.[11] In her work on female blues artists, Angela Davis remarked how their "work addressed urgent social issues and helped to shape collective modes of black consciousness" (Davis 1998: xiv).

10. The literature on Katrina and the 1927 Mississippi Flood is rich—a few notable works on Katrina include Douglas Brinkley, *The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf Coast* (2006); Michael D. Dyson, *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster* (2007); and *Katrina's Imprint: Race and Vulnerability in America* (2010), edited by Keith Wailoo, et al. For the 1927 Flood, a number of histories have been consulted including John M. Barry, *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America* (1997); Pete Daniel, *Deep'n As It Come: The 1927 Mississippi River Flood* (1977); Patrick O'Daniel, *When the Levee Breaks: Memphis and the Mississippi Valley Flood of 1927* (2013); David Cohn, *Where I Was Born and Raised* (1935). Environmental historian Christopher Morris contends that "The 1927 flood was, and by some measures remains, the nation's greatest natural disaster remembered in photos, songs and film" (2012: 165).

11. Many works on the blues have been consulted including the classic by Alan Lomax, *The Land Where the Blues Began* (1993); David Evans, *Big Road Blues: Tradition and Creativity in the Folk Blues* (1982); and *Nobody Knows Where the Blues Come From: Lyrics and History* (2006), edited by Robert Springer.

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Returning to this article's beginnings—popular images and histories of the Mississippi and Volga Rivers as seen through the working experiences of African Americans and barge haulers—no one narrative prevails. Instead a multi-dimensional representation surfaces. For the burlaki and African Americans working on what were becoming national rivers, their connections possessed an immediacy lacking in the passive traveler's account or the abstract logistics of the engineer. Instead, the river was met through one's labor and often the same system that subdued and degraded the river sought to subdue and degrade labor. The rivers assumed new meanings derived from these touchpoints of labor. The intersection of labor and the environment produced experiences that influenced new narratives describing these national rivers. Through the recollections of the burlaki and African Americans, another history of the Volga and Mississippi Rivers emerges. Seen through the prism of labor, the rivers represent a different facet in people's lives. While the rivers might still play an ornamental role—appreciated for their power and beauty—the more common reaction is their exacting nature. For the burlaki, Volga shallows might result in only covering one-half league a day. For African Americans, a Mississippi levee breaks, taking the year's crops.

In comparing the burlaki on the Volga with enslaved and free African Americans on the Mississippi, similarities between the two groups existed. Their connections to the river were immediate, intimate, exacting, often tedious and brutal concomitant with marginalized lives consigned to society's fringe. Yet, there were also marked differences. For enslaved African Americans the river represented not only the journey into the Deep South and slavery but also the possibility of freedom while the surrounding wetlands and swamps offered a free, racialized space. To the barge haulers, life on the riverbanks lining the Volga allowed for an existence outside the conventional. For both groups, however, the same rivers also imprisoned. but while movement was restricted in Imperial Russia, the barge haulers did not endure the same deprivations as the enslaved. Yet for both, the harsh, everyday existence—whether pulling a barge or fueling a steamboat boiler—resulted

in the same ills, a shortened impoverished life.[12] Still, the lives shaped by laboring on the Volga and Mississippi Rivers, produced rich cultures revealing another river distinct from the dominant narratives. In both instances, the rivers possessed an agency, enshrining an ambiguity in humans' kinship to the environment. In concluding, perhaps no one captured this better than formerly enslaved, William Bibb, who in remembering the Ohio River, a major tributary of the Mississippi, invoked an aesthetic appreciation of the river, an awareness of the river's mobility and prowess, coupled with a freedom only reserved for some. In other words, all the beneficence of the river in tandem with the jarring image of slavery:

> I have stood upon the lofty banks of the river Ohio, gazing upon the splendid steamboats, wafted with all their magnificence up and down the river, and I thought of the fishes of the water, the fowls of the air, the wild beasts of the forest, all appeared to be free, to go just where they please, and I am an unhappy slave. (Bibb 1849: 19)

12. High mortality rates were the norm for the burlaki and enslaved. For the burlaki, one estimate was an annual rate of seven-thousand and for those who survived, many were in broken health. See Jerome Blum, *Lord and Peasant in Russia: From the Ninth to the Nineteenth Century* (1970: 283). In the case of the enslaved, one indication that life spans were short is that in the Lower Mississippi Valley the mortality rate among slaves was so high the planters would not allow census workers to count the slaves on their plantations. See John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (1999: 10).

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THE CHOSEN PEOPLE: THE HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF AMERICAN IDENTITY*

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INTRODUCTION

Riverscapes and National Identities explores the relation between national identity and riverscape imagery, with reference to dominant visual representations of five rivers in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America and Europe: the Hudson, Thames, Seine, Volga, and the Shannon (Cusack 2019). The book argues that such riverscapes embodied ideas about the national homeland and about cultural identities and that they carried the dominant ideologies of national elites. In each country, the riverscape offered a different story, or a combination of stories, helping to create national mythologies. As a transnational phenomenon, nationalist ideology is purveyed by many means including visual art. The painted riverscape as a representation of the national homeland thus became a transnational concept emerging across nations, although made distinct for each nation. When *Riverscapes* was first published in 2010 however, the concept of the riverscape was little used in a cultural or humanities context, and river scenes were discussed under the rubric of landscape (Schönach 2017: 11).[1] A landscape refers either to the land and its human

*This article is an excerpt (Chapter 2) from Cusack's *Riverscapes and National Identities* (2019), Syracuse University Press, prefaced with a new introduction by the author. The author would like to thank Syracuse University Press for kindly allowing this chapter to be reprinted.

1. River scenes are classed as "landscapes," for example, by Hemingway (1992) in his early analysis of river imagery. Paula Schönach notes the development of "riverscape" as a conceptual tool in *Riverscapes* (Schönach 2017: 11).

fashioning, or to second-order representations of the fashioned land, for example in painting. In *Riverscapes* the term 'riverscape' is used independently of, but analogous to, that of 'landscape,' that is, to refer both to the river itself and its human shaping, but particularly to visual representation.

The suffix '-scape' was originally an abbreviation of the word landscape. In an essay of 1990, Arjun Appadurai presented a framework for analyzing what he called global cultural flows in the late twentieth century. Appadurai employed '-scape' here to denote what he termed a "perspectival construct," that is, a reading of something that was inflected by the viewer's historical and political situation (296). He affixed '-scape' to five dimensions which he then (somewhat confusingly) collectively described as landscapes. Although Appadurai's framework was designed to apply to a fast-moving and disjunctive global world, his use of '-scapes' was suggestive. The riverscape as a visual image might be considered a "perspectival construct" in the sense that how the riverscape is shaped, and the meanings attributed to it, will depend upon the conditions and concerns of specific social groups at certain historical junctures. The different geographical, social and political situations of particular countries provided very different contexts for the forms and meanings of their riverscapes.

Riverscapes may be distinguished from landscapes in some key respects. The riverscape is qualitatively different in that what is being "fixed" is something that is essentially defined by movement, while the observer will have some general imagining of the river's pattern, that is, that it arises from some source and flows to some outlet. Rivers have long provided a metaphor for the passage of time and for life and renewal, therefore serving as a useful symbol of national vitality, and the smooth flow of national history. The riverscape incorporates both the distinct symbolic potential of the flowing river and the peculiar qualities of the fixed image. In order to serve as a coherent and memorable iconology, a national riverscape imagery must be based on repeated and recognizable themes, and attach the river to particular topographies.[2] For instance, in the case of the United States, a national

2. Riverscapes of the Thames in England had two dominant topographical variants, corresponding to the dual identities of "Britishness" and "Eng-

identity associated with the notion of the pioneer was symbolized by images of the river seen in its "natural" habitat, the upstream river in the wilderness, not the Lower Hudson of New York.

A national riverscape may be regarded as a visual text that forms part of a discourse in the Foucauldian sense, that is, it actively constitutes national imaginings.[3] As with any ideological representation, national riverscapes constitute highly selective sets of images that symbolize and help to construct particular notions of identity. Foucault argued that power is most effective when largely concealed (1990: 86). Riverscapes provide an excellent subterfuge for the purveyance of discursive knowledge/power, since art is generally promoted as a medium of expression innocent of ideology. Furthermore, the simplified, semi-mythical quality of many images of the national homeland makes them more tenacious as a national symbol than a more complicated and contradictory representation might be.

National riverscapes do not arise by chance. In the United States, as in Russia, the creation of a national riverscape was the outcome of conscious programs by close-knit networks of artists and influential patrons to develop an imagery of the homeland. Ernest Renan drew attention to the significance of forgetting in the making of national histories (1934: 25). If riverscapes help to construct identities and embody memories, they may also represent a forgetting or elision of alternative identities and memories. The art of the Hudson River School represented the river viewed, or overviewed from afar in a typical sublime setting of mountains and autumnal trees invoking the seminal figure of the pilgrim-pioneer. The wilderness was symbolically appropriated for the new pioneers, while Native Americans were visually excluded or marginalized. In late nineteenth-century France, sunny Impressionist images of leisure on the Seine occluded the recent history of the Commune and portrayed the increasingly powerful bourgeoisie (Cusack 2019: 97–126). As the art of the Hudson River

lishness"; Shannon riverscapes represented the nation's mythical past and modern future (Cusack 2019: 57–96, 158–89).

3. For Foucault, discourses were not simply "groups of signs […] but […] practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 1992: 49).

School, and of the Impressionists, has tended to be uncritically celebrated by art historians and others, these ideological moves have been largely overlooked. The process has an echo in Stéphane Castonguay and Hubert Samson's present study of the Saint-Maurice River watershed in this issue, as they observe how hydroelectric construction not only affected the Saint-Maurice River watershed materially, but the resulting surveys and maps symbolically erased the history and habitat of the Atikamekw.

The place of religion in the formation of national identity has been debated in nationalism studies since Gellner (1983), Anderson (1991) and others made it clear that they regarded nationalism as in some sense a heroic substitute for religious authority, while other writers subsequently (Cusack 1997; Hastings 1997; Smith 2003) have argued that religion may be an integral component of nationalism. Riverscapes of the Hudson, as well as those of the Shannon, Thames, and Volga established, in different ways, an intimate relation between Christianity and national identity, while in nineteenth-century France, by contrast, modern riverscapes were linked to secularism. Religion has been employed as a means of excluding some occupants of the national territory from full nationality and this exclusive religious nationalism was symbolically reinforced in riverscapes, whether through the art of the Hudson River School or in Volga riverscapes that symbolically excluded Tatars and others—even converts to Orthodoxy—as "non-Russians."

New studies of rivers have continued to emerge in various disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Rachel Havrelock's *River Jordan: The Mythology of a Dividing Line* (2011) analyzes the Jordan as a border and marker of identity contested by Israelis and Palestinians in both political and symbolic terms, drawing on folkloric and biblical studies, maps and myths. In *A Story of Six Rivers: History, Culture and Ecology*, the environmental historian Peter Coates notes that he was interested in studying some less well-known rivers and "the river rather than the riverscape as a cultural construction" (2013: 12). One of his examples is the Los Angeles River, partly chosen, Coates says, for its complete obscurity. Dorothy Zeisler-Vralsted's *Rivers, Memory, and Nation-Building: A History of the Volga and Mississippi Rivers* (2015) compares these two rivers over many years, beginning

with the rivers, rather than a specific period or culture so that, "from the starting point of the Volga and Mississippi Rivers, a more nuanced history is revealed as the rivers diminish the traditional markers that shape the history of cultures and nations. When the river becomes the organizing theme, a different story evolves" (8). In *Along Ukraine's River: A Social and Environmental History of the Dnipro* (2018), Roman Adrian Cybriwsky approaches his subject from the perspectives of geography and urban studies, finding parallels with the national rivers discussed in *Riverscapes*. Cybriwsky states that "The continuity of flow can be seen as metaphor for the continuity of Ukrainian identity over the course of history despite the obstacles, and for a yearning that tomorrow will be better" (9). He also notes the Dnipro's religious significance, another shared theme. Stories of rivers, then, are expanding in many interesting and multidisciplinary directions, with intriguing potential crossovers, and they will be further amplified in the volume of *RIAS* before you here.

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The process of nation-formation in the United States has so far been surprisingly neglected, and as one commentator put it, America "remains on the sidelines in nationalism studies" (Grant 1997: 89)[4]. This disregard may be because America has not easily fitted models of national development based on European examples, for instance in its relative neglect of the past, or because national identity is simply taken for granted. The process of national-identity formation is always complex, and particularly so in nineteenth-century America, so this chapter can offer only a brief critical overview of some aspects. It focuses on the religious-ethnic and gender contexts of national identity formation in this period, and on the figure of the pioneer, and suggests how some of the iconic paintings of the Hudson River School contributed to the construction of an exclusive national identity. It is clear

4. This article began its course as a paper entitled "The Chosen People: Hudson Valley Landscapes and American Identity," presented in April 2003 at the Association of Art Historians Annual Conference, "Articulations," at Birkbeck and University College, London. The descriptors "American" or "America" are used in this chapter as shorthand alternatives to "the United States."

that over the course of the nineteenth century a powerful ideology of nationalism, allied to a peculiar sense of divine purpose, was consolidated in America, and I argue that this ideology was supported by a visual discourse of American scenery focused on the Hudson Valley riverscape. During the first half of the century, the American "nation" had fluid boundaries as vast territories were purchased, acquired by treaty, annexed, or taken by force (Foley 1991: 178). There was a diverse and growing population, and an increasing schism between North and South, eventually "resolved" by the Civil War of 1861–1865. It was especially during this period of flux and rapid growth that conscious efforts were made by a group of Northeastern artists and their influential patrons to consolidate and to represent an American national identity through shaping an image of the homeland.

This chapter examines the role of the Hudson River School artists, especially their 'leader' Thomas Cole, Asher Brown Durand, Jasper Francis Cropsey, and others,[5] in the creation of a national riverscape that embodied particular conceptions of American identity. The Hudson River School of artists is well known to scholars and students of American art and their contribution to the representation of an American wilderness imagery is acknowledged. However, the extensive art-historical accounts of their work, with a few exceptions (such as Boime 1991; Miller 1993), tend to be celebratory rather than critical and fail to properly examine their art in relation to the representation and creation of American identity. My aim is to remedy this omission by examining not only what was depicted in Hudson River School riverscapes but what was omitted or elided from them, as well as how they became hegemonic images in American art and society.

Hudson River School art created an imagery of the American wilderness, based on the Hudson Valley, that focused on distant horizons and embodied a notion of pioneering Christian endeavor. Such art was encouraged and supported by some of New York's most powerful figures in the interest of forging a national identity.

5. The school's 'membership' has varied according to whether it has been restricted to those who remained in the Hudson Valley and had personal connections with Cole or his pupil Frederic Edwin Church, the definition preferred here.

In the first section, I introduce Cole and consider the New York-based patronage that brought his work and that of his associates to prominence.

The second section considers the relation between the wilderness and religion enshrined in Hudson River School art. Recent debates among nationalism scholars have drawn attention to the significance of religion for the construction of national identity. Hudson River School art imbued the riverscape with Christian symbolism and confirmed the wilderness as the special domain of white Americans, whether for future development or aesthetic contemplation. In order to provide a context for the religious symbolism of Hudson River School art, I will examine the dominance of Christian ideology in America at that time. The belief of early settlers that they were a special people sent by God to cultivate the wilderness and to prepare for the millennium persisted. In Protestant eyes, Native Americans were viewed as heathen savages, while Native American men were simultaneously denigrated as effeminate in contrast to the masculinity of the pioneer[6]. As we shall see, the notion of a chosen people had affinities not only with ancient Israel, but also with Britain, the main source of American immigration. I suggest that the wilderness as depicted in key riverscapes of the Hudson River School was associated with the notion of chosenness, as well as with the masculine pioneer, and that Hudson riverscapes tended to be the imagined domain of the white male pilgrim-pioneer, the prototypical American.[7]

The third and fourth parts help to demonstrate the peculiar ideological character of Hudson River School riverscapes, first by showing how they were selected from a wide range of alternative Hudson riverscapes, and second by discussing how

6. Protestant traditions, especially those that took biblical injunctions literally, sanctioned women's subordination to men. An anonymous critic in Jonathan Elliot's *Guide to the Capitol* of 1830 compared Indian males to women: "the body of a male Indian is as smooth [...] as that of the most delicate white female; and this may be easily accounted for from the indolent and inactive lives they usually lead" (qtd. in Scheckel 1998: 138).

7. The popular figure of the pioneer effectively excluded women as agents of nation-formation. The Fourteenth Amendment of 1868, which conferred universal citizenship on those born or naturalized in the United States, for the first time applied the descriptor "male" to voters (Stansell 2000: 7).

they elided the "Hudson River Indians" from the national scene. In the third section, I argue that many depictions of the Hudson River in the first half of the nineteenth century did not conform to the content or style associated with the Hudson River School, but instead were present-oriented, celebrating the country seats of the wealthy or their leisure accoutrements and activities. Both such riverscapes, depicting the estates and leisure pursuits of the wealthy and the more grandiose visions of the Hudson River School symbolically occluded Native Americans from the riverscape. The fourth section considers how the "Hudson River Indians" were officially regarded and represented at this time in order to explore how and why they were occluded especially from the nationalist vision of the Hudson River School.

The fifth and final part examines a symbolic focus on the future embodied in Hudson River School art. Although Americans looked back to Christopher Columbus as the model for the explorer, and revered the Founding Fathers, the historical past was relatively neglected in favor of a focus on a future rather than a past Golden Age. This derogation of the past arguably resulted from the propensity to deny Native American history as well as a desire to be independent of Europe and its cultivation of 'history.' The Hudson River School contributed to this process, especially from mid-century, by helping to affirm a future-oriented and even modern nationalism. As Cole recognized, there was always an inherent conflict between preserving "God's wilderness" and its future settlement, and this opposition was later played out in pastoral riverscapes framed by the wilderness out of which they were forged. The pioneer identity was broadened during the nineteenth century to embrace the entrepreneur-developer. Land, liberty, and property became the cornerstones of a dynamic masculine progress into the wilderness, and what Albert Boime has called the "magisterial gaze" dominated Hudson riverscapes. In Cole's riverscapes, however, the distant gaze was arguably that of the aspiring pilgrim and I suggest that the gaze implied in much Hudson River School art was that of the pilgrim-pioneer as well as that of the pioneer-developer. The wilderness riverscape of the Hudson River School thus presented an identifiable, national homeland for exclusive occupancy by Euro-Christian settlers.

It came to represent its seamless transformation into a pastoral and sometimes even technological scene that heralded the nation's future Golden Age still tinged with hopes of the Promised Land.

NEW YORK AND THE HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL

The significance attributed to the Hudson and its representations, and its role in the construction of national identity, depended heavily on the hegemonic economic and cultural status of New York, and as we shall see Hudson River School art was peculiarly suited to express contemporary nationalist aspirations. The Hudson River runs to New York Bay from the Adirondack Mountains; at 315 miles in length it is smaller than the Seine and tiny compared to the Mississippi (Mulligan 1985: xvi). However, much of it ran through unknown wilderness. Cole, the pivotal figure in the Hudson River School, enthused in his "Essay on American Scenery" that "[t]he Hudson for […] magnificence is unsurpassed […] The Rhine has its castled crags […] and ancient villages; the Hudson has its wooded mountains, its rugged precipices, its green undulating shores—a natural majesty" (1836: 6). However, Cole also noted the capacity of the Hudson for "improvement by art" (Wilton 2002: 23). The Hudson River School artists learned from the Scottish panorama invented at the end of the eighteenth century. They also admired the picturesque style of Claude Lorrain, with its characteristic pictorial elements of dark foreground, trees framing the composition, water in the middle ground, and distant mountains (Duret-Robert 1982: 100). Cole took up the picturesque theories of Uvedale Price, who believed that the main features of landscape were trees and water (Daniels 1993: 155). Thus for Cole, water was "[a] component of scenery, without which every landscape is defective" (4). Cole made detailed outdoor sketches but combined different scenes or viewpoints in his painting so that "the most lovely and perfect parts of Nature may be brought together, and combined in a whole that shall surpass in beauty and effect any picture painted from a single view" (qtd. in Baigell 1998: 13). This composite method meant that the features of his riverscapes need not be read too literally, thereby allowing greater scope for rhetorical or metaphorical imaginings. It also resulted in an idealized vision of America.

Hudson River School paintings celebrating the wilderness enjoyed a high status not simply as art but as images of the nation, and this status was mainly owing to the patronage of powerful New York patrons. Cole was an English émigré born in Lancashire in 1801 who had moved with his family to the United States in 1818 at age seventeen and in 1825 moved to New York, which possessed a vibrant literary and visual culture. The "Hudson River School" was a derogatory title bestowed on artists centered around Cole, possibly by a critic from the *New York Tribune* in the 1870s,[8] when their panoramic realist pictures of the Hudson Valley were being derided as unfashionable, but both before and after this date their work was admired. Thus Cole was being hailed a few years after his death in 1848 as "our revered Prince […] our great Cole" (Richards 1854: 258–59).

From the 1820s there was a demand from cultural critics and others for Americans "to produce a literature, a drama, an art that would express and affirm the nation's distinctive identity" (Scheckel 1998: 8). The influential president of the American Academy of Fine Arts, Colonel John Trumbull, who painted romanticized battle scenes of the American Revolution in which he had fought, had "long sought an artistic expression for his young country" (Lassiter 1978: 9), and he found it in Cole's work, which he happened upon in 1825. Trumbull showed off Cole's painting to William Dunlap, artist and art critic of the *New York Mirror*, as well as to Durand (Lassiter 9; National Gallery of Art 2008), and he subsequently introduced Cole to patrons among "rich Federalist families, landowners, merchants, and lawyer-politicians […], a kind of American squirearchy" (Hughes 1997: 141). In 1826, Cole became a founding member of the National Academy of Design, the first institution to focus on American art (Minks 1989: 13; National Gallery of Art 2008). One of Cole's influential patrons was Philip Hone, mayor of New York and one of the richest collectors in the city (Boime 1991: 48). Cole's art was also taken up by William Cullen Bryant, poet and editor first of the *New York Review* and the *Athenaeum* magazine, then campaigning editor of the *New York Evening Post* (Ringe 1954: 233–34; Lewis 2005: 205). Nathaniel Parker Willis

8. The originator of the term and its first use are not clear; it may have been published first in the *Art Amateur* in 1879 (Avery 1987: 3–5).

observed how frequently "the pen of the poet and the pencil of the artist [had] united to record the grandeur and sublimity of the Hudson" (1840: 2, 18). Thus Bryant's verse eulogized the "kingly Hudson" and Cole's painting similarly idealized it. Artists, writers, lawyers, professors, and merchants with a common interest in the Hudson Valley wilderness met regularly in New York from the 1820s, for instance under the wing of James Fenimore Cooper, whose weekly club meetings at the City Hotel were attended by Cole, Durand, and Bryant (Lassiter 1978: 17–18). Cole and Bryant enjoyed the "wilds" of nature and shared a belief that nature inspired moral and religious feeling; their nationalist vision of America was correspondingly based on its natural scenery and the idea of the sublime, and both represented life and time by a flowing river (Sanford 1957: 434, 437–438, 444). Bryant was later instrumental in encouraging the city to buy the space for Central Park, intended to accommodate "trees from all over the US and twisting paths and lonely dells—a Hudson River painting come to life" (J. Jones 2002: 13).

By mid-century New York was the metropolitan and artistic center of America (Howat 1987: 49). The Hudson River Railroad opened its line between New York and Greenbush on the east bank opposite Albany in 1851, and in the second half of the century the east bank became "the favorite retreat of famous writers, generals, inventors, statesmen; a new class of bewilderingly wealthy entrepreneurs [who] created great landed estates and transformed the banks of the Hudson into one of the most highly-groomed landscapes in all America" (Van Zandt 1992: 271). The owners of these manicured estates were the patrons of wilderness riverscapes of the Hudson. Many Northeastern businessmen enriched themselves in the Civil War and spent large sums on American art (Minks 1989: 17). Thomas Prichard Rossiter's *A Pic-Nic on the Hudson* (1863) depicted a group of prosperous and stylish neighbors and friends of the artist, some in Federalist uniform, on an outing to Constitution Island, posed under a canopy of carefully delineated native foliage in front of the Hudson. Hudson River School art was supported by such a wealthy and well-connected elite, whose political, business, and cultural/religious interests were served by the new art of American riverscape. For many years, the work

of the group of artists around Cole, and later around his pupil Frederic Edwin Church, was feted, and Hudson River School paintings were engraved and popularized as prints. "We can't conceive of how revered these artists were. They were the celebrities of their day" (qtd. in Berman 58). Several of the artists moved out of New York next to the river, Cole to Catskill Village, and Church and Cropsey to large houses with Hudson views. When Cole decided to visit Europe, Bryant addressed a sonnet to him ("To Cole, the Painter, Departing for Europe") warning Cole not to be seduced by European scenery to the neglect of the United States (Lassiter 1978: 25–26), a reminder of how closely the nationalist project was controlled by a coterie of influential and determined New York men.[9]

THE WILDERNESS RIVERSCAPE AND THE PROMISED LAND

The formation of national identity in nineteenth-century America depended on a Christian ethos that was enshrined in Hudson River School art and closely associated with the image of the wilderness. As Clifford Longley has observed, before and after the Revolution "the likening of the North American continent to a Promised Land is a strong element in the emerging sense of American nationhood" (2003: 228). There was a widespread belief that America had the key role to play in preparing for the millennium (Tuveson 1980: vii–x): "The notion of the redeemer nation, and of the special role of the United States in the divine plan for the world, was a commonplace of Victorian America" (Parish 15). In this scheme of things, Native Americans were regarded as obstacles, even by Puritans as "Satan's disciples" (Mihesuah 1996: 40). The Church in America was and remains nonestablished, and it has been suggested that the United States led Europe in breaking the relationship between Church and State (Nye 1966: 46). However, religion remained central to American institutions and national identity in the form of what Robert N. Bellah termed the "American civil religion"; this encompassed a belief in the nation's divine destiny and was closely identified in the nineteenth century with Protestantism (Bellah 2005: 40–55; Cherry 1998: 8–10, 14; Parish 2003: 18, 62;

9. In Russia a little later, Ilya Repin was to be reminded by nationalist friends to paint the Russian scene, not Paris (see Chapter 5, "Our Russian Essence," in Cusack's *Riverscapes and National Identities*).

see also Hudson 1970: xxiii, 103–4). The civil religion drew on biblical events as "archetypes" and on key events in American history such as the Revolution as revelatory of divine favor, while the Civil War was interpreted as a redemptive event recalling America to its "destiny under God" (Bellah 2005: 47–48; Hudson 1970: 74; Cherry 1998: 10–11, 168). Until well after the turn of the twentieth century in America, "theological language, religious metaphors, and biblical allusions were as characteristic of political discourse and historical writing as they were of sermonic literature" (Hudson 1970: xi) and they are not uncommon today. A Nonconformist tradition had persisted in America since the seventeenth century, and many had seen the wilderness as a place to enact their version of practical Christianity. For Thomas Jefferson, farmers colonizing the wilderness were "the chosen people of God" and America's liberty was a God-given birthright (Foley 1991: 9).[10]

The idea of chosenness can be located in the broader debate in nationalism studies concerning the significance of religion to national identity-formation (Anderson 1991; Hastings 1997: 1; Cusack 1997: 77). According to Anthony Smith, the idea of a chosen people is intimately bound up with the possession of religious faith and it has been pervasive in different periods and places, as well as a persistent characteristic of nationalist ideology and nation-states (Smith 1999: 332, 335).[11] The English regarded themselves as an elect people, as Adrian Hastings argued, after the Reformation, together with the English defeat of the Spanish Armada, "and […]the establishment of emphatically Protestant colonies in America […] combined to convince the English that they were, within the Christian world, a chosen people" (1999: 393). Hastings's characterization draws together some common threads of nationalist ideology: a masculine militarism and adventurism, supported by religious conviction. At the end of the eighteenth century, 70 percent of Americans were of English or Welsh descent

10. Jefferson owned slaves; so did Washington (Grant 1997: 84).

11. The Old Testament model of divine favor accorded to a particular ethnic group was adopted not only among Jews, but by many others, including the Afrikaners who migrated from the Cape Colony into the wild interior in the 1830s: "The Great Trek was their exodus; their wandering in the wilderness […] their […] journey to the Promised Land" (Cauthen 1997: 118).

and a further 15 percent were of Scottish or Irish descent (Maidment and McGrew 1991: 13). It was arguably this English militant and Protestant sense of ethnic chosenness, transplanted to America, that eventually formed part of a newly constituted American identity, underpinning what Smith terms the "national mission," namely "to create and preserve a distinctive, united and autonomous nation" (Smith 1999: 333). Cole himself, for example, came from an English Nonconformist background. Although the nation was ostensibly secular, the civil religion dominated by Protestantism became the core of national identity; the notion of chosenness was deeply inculcated and intimately associated with the natural scene as a manifestation of the Promised Land.

Cole's beliefs, and those of other Hudson River School artists such as Durand and Church, were consistent with the discourse defining America as a Promised Land, and their writings make clear that their art was intended to depict nature infused with a sense of the "divine." Cole was a devout Christian brought up in England as a Nonconformist who then entered the Episcopalian Church (Storr 1994: 26). He wrote that "[i]t was on Mount Horeb that Elijah […] heard the 'still small voice'—that voice is YET heard among the mountains! […] the wilderness is YET a fitting place to speak to God" (1836: 2). Cole saw the wilderness as an "undefiled" paradise associated with the biblical wilderness (4), a religiosity expressed in his art. Church similarly saw himself as a prophet for America's divine mission (Barringer 2002: 54). Like Ruskin, whose *Modern Painters* (1843–1860) was much admired in the United States, the painters of the Hudson River School observed the landscape as God's handiwork, and Durand wrote in *The Crayon* in 1855 that "the true province of Landscape Art is the representation of the work of God in the visible creation" (qtd. in Ferber 2007: 248).[12] For these devout Protestant painters of the Hudson River School, the wilderness was perceived as a kind of untouched creation of God (Hughes 1997: 138), and their art fitted the religious aspirations of the young nation.

12. Durand saw America as a specially chosen land, declaiming in a speech of 1817, "America is the last hope of human greatness […] it is the last asylum for the rights of man; the hand of the Eternal guards it from destruction!" (qtd. in Durand 2007: 31).

By the nineteenth century the ideology of chosenness was unquestioned, and it was maintained in much art and literature. For example, William S. Jewett's painting entitled *Promised Land* (1850) focused on a pioneer family in the wilderness, the man in buckskins resting confidently on his rifle and a seated woman holding a child on her knee in the style of conventional depictions of the Madonna and child. Herman Melville in his autobiographical novel *White Jacket* (1850) confided in his readers:

> We Americans are the peculiar, chosen people—the Israel of our time; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world [...] God has predestined, mankind expects, great things from our race [...] The rest of the nations must soon be in our rear. We are the pioneers of the world; the advance-guard, sent on through the wilderness of untried things, to break a new path in the New World that is ours. (142–43)

Washington Irving, who according to Edgar Mayhew Bacon "may almost be said to have discovered the Hudson" through his writings (1903: 246), in 1820 advised that "[h]e [...] who would study nature in its wildness [...] must plunge into the forest [...] must stem the torrent, and dare the precipice" (Roque 1987: 23); that is, the writer or artist himself must become a pioneer. The wilderness quest could be an actual physical one, or experienced imaginatively through the mediums of visual and verbal descriptions. It has been suggested that whereas European depictions of nature presented the viewer with a "bucolic object of contemplation," American scenes encouraged participation (Aikin 2000: 84). Just as pilgrims (or pioneers) traveling together forge a common identity as a result of their shared experience (Anderson 1991: 53–54), the actual or imagined trek into the wilderness would help to shape a new American identity. Thus urban dwellers looking at Hudson River School paintings could travel in their mind's eye toward and up the Hudson, imaginatively joining in the pilgrimage of the pioneer. In this way, Hudson River School paintings contributed to a process of imagining a national identity based on a fictive experience of the wilderness, assuming the active role of the masculine pilgrim-pioneer. American identity became associated with this "pioneering spirit" and with a notion of chosenness, which in turn were associated with a white Protestant masculinity: "America was seen as a second Garden

of Eden and the American as a second Adam" (Foley 1991: 9).[13] As we shall see, the appropriation of a "pristine" natural riverscape as well as the incorporation of Christian symbolism formed part of this discourse.

The association between the wilderness and American national identity was created in the nineteenth century. Earlier settlers, despite their hopes and beliefs, had found America to be a "horrible wilderness" (Hastings 1997: 78). American scenery had initially been perceived as historically impoverished and unrefined in comparison to European landscape, "rude without picturesqueness" (Cole 1836: 3), but it was then realized that its wildness and "emptiness" could serve as its point of difference. For Cole, who set out for his first extended sketching expedition along the Hudson in 1825 (National Gallery of Art 2008), the wildness of American scenery was its distinctive and impressive feature and the subject should be of "surpassing interest" to every American: "it is his own land […] and how undeserving of such a birthright, if he can turn towards it an unobserving eye, an unaffected heart!" (1836: 1). With the enthusiasm of the converted, Cole became a passionate advocate of America and its boundless possibilities. Thus in his lecture published as "Essay on American Scenery" he claimed that

> American associations are not so much of the past as of the present and the future […] look down into the bosom of that secluded valley […] a silver stream winds lingeringly along […] on its banks are rural dwellings shaded by elms and garlanded by flowers […] freedom's offspring—peace, security, and happiness, dwell there […] And in looking over the yet uncultivated scene, the mind's eye may see far into futurity. Where the wolf roams, the plough shall glisten; on the gray crag shall rise temple and tower—mighty deeds shall be done in the now pathless wilderness. (8)

Cole's American future is to be a Golden Age of monumental architecture and glorious deeds. Although Cole criticized the "barbarism" with which the wildernesses were being cleared, he claimed, "We are still in Eden" (9). His American present is an idyllic valley, its riverbanks dotted with bucolic residences and emanating vir-

13. The women's movement in nineteenth-century America found it necessary to appeal to the "secular rhetoric" of the Revolution and Enlightenment in order to try to improve their status (Perry 1993: 73).

tues of liberty and happiness. As explained in *The Literary World* (1852), "the strongest feeling of the American is to that which is new and fresh—to the freedom of the [...] forests—to the energy of the wild life. He may look with *interest* to the ruins of Italy, but with *enthusiasm* to the cabin of the pioneer" (Roque 1987: 39).

The God-fearing pioneer was a key figure in the development of an American identity and often represented or implied in Hudson River School scenes. In mid-nineteenth-century America, "statesmen, survey leaders, and artists and writers saw themselves [...] in the image of the early explorers" (Truettner 10), and American presidential candidates were apt to draw on their "log-cabin origins" (Baigell 1998: 78).[14] An engraving for a banknote of ca. 1852–1857 (fig. 1) shows a broad-chested pioneer clearing trees and turning to look back at his cabin: a popular image that by now was emblematic of a discourse of the God-fearing American pioneer establishing himself in the Promised Land.

Fig. 1. Rawdon, Wright, Hatch, and Edson (New York). Proof for banknote vignette, ca. 1852–57. Engraving. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Cole's *Home in the Woods* (1847), commissioned by the American Art Union, depicts, atypically for Cole, a domesticated pioneer riverscape. An idealized happy family—mother, two children, and grandmother—is seen gathered outside their tidy log cabin, to greet the father who waves as he returns shouldering his catch. The river here is not a distant object, but runs almost

14. Cole may have been referring to the Whig politician William Henry Harrison, whose presidential campaign in 1840 made such a claim (Baigell 1998: 78).

into the foreground and its purpose is utilitarian, to provide food. Beside the cabin, kitchen utensils are drying and washing hangs on the line. However, the glow of an evening sun suffuses the whole scene, and the riverscape is framed by the following elevated verse: "And minds have there been nurtured, whose control / Is felt even in their nation's destiny; / Men who swayed senates with a statesman's soul / And looked on armies with a leader's eye" (qtd. in Baigell 1998: 78).

In Cole's art, the farseeing gaze could have an allegorical aspect, the journey to the horizon being that of the pilgrim seeking salvation as well as the imagined route of the pioneer. The dissenting culture with which Cole was familiar rejected traditional religious art, but it encouraged the use of religious emblems or symbols (Wallach 1977: 235), and Cole imbued the Hudson riverscape with more or less overt Christian symbolism. For example, Cole's *View of the Round-Top in the Catskill Mountains* (also known as *Sunny Morning on the Hudson River*) (1827; fig. 2) depicts a rough and uncomfortable foreground with broken rocks and blasted trees. An abandoned Indian altar appears to confirm the demise of Native American history and religion and the present vacancy of the land. However, a prominent, dark mound of hillside cuts diagonally across the picture space, obstructing the view and the passage

Fig. 2. Thomas Cole, *View of the Round-Top in the Catskill Mountains*, 1827. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Reprinted by permission.

to the river. Although several distant sailing boats are visible, the sign of "civilization," the river is depicted as far away, pale and serene against a golden horizon. The overall effect is one of a future riverscape of tranquility difficult to attain—requiring a pioneering effort as well as a kind of "pilgrim's progress" toward it (as in John Bunyan's Christian allegory).

Cole's celebrated series *The Voyage of Life*, consisting of four riverscapes based on the Hudson Valley and the Catskills (Richards 1854: 259), can be seen to represent a pioneering American Christian identity in the making. Commissioned by a New York merchant, Samuel Ward, for his private chapel (Minks 1989: 13), this series was painted ca. 1839–1840. Because of problems exhibiting the paintings,[15] Cole repeated the whole series with minor variations in 1841–1842, which indicates how important he regarded a public viewing of this series to be. *The Voyage of Life* again depends on the trope of the masculine explorer, steering himself along an uncharted river, aided only by religious faith. The series represents the archetypal spiritual quest, once more along the lines of Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), in which the allegorical hero, Christian, reaches the River of the Water of Life that sustains him, as well as the River of Death that leads him to Heaven.

The four river scenes of *The Voyage of Life* symbolize the passage of an individual life (*Childhood*; *Youth* [fig. 3, on the following page]; *Manhood*; *Old Age*) and are rooted in Christian symbolism: the River of Life; the guardian angel; and the Kingdom of Heaven. Indeed they may have been based on a sermon by the Reverend Reginald Heber on the theme "Life bears us on like the stream of a mighty river" (Wallach 1977: 239; Baigell 1998: 62).

The riverscapes include the guardian angel of Christian mythology as the life companion of a male figure voyaging along the river in a small boat. In an accompanying text, Cole

15. Ward died before Cole completed the series, and following a dispute his heirs refused to allow it to be exhibited, so Cole decided to repaint the series, which he did in Rome based on watercolors from the originals (Lassiter 1978: 51; Wallach 1977: 234). The first series is now in the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, New York, and the second is in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Unless otherwise stated, my comments on individual pictures are based on the first series.

Fig. 3. Thomas Cole, *The Voyage of Life: Youth*, 1842. Oil on canvas; 52 7/8 x 76 3/4 in. (134.3 x 194.9 cm). Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, 1971.16.2.

explained that the boat was borne out of the cavern "our earthly origin" down the "Stream of Life" (Wallach 1977: 239). *Childhood* depicts a baby protected by this shining winged figure emerging from the cavern in his boat into a landscape of curious vegetation, where according to Cole "the luxuriant flowers and plants, are emblems of the joyousness of early life [...] the Egyptian Lotus, in the foreground [...] is symbolical of human life" (Wallach 1977: 239). The boat is a hybrid of an Indian canoe and a Viking warship with a gilt sculptural angel for a figurehead. *Youth* has a bold young man setting forth upriver, his guardian angel seeing him off from the bank. The vegetation again is an exotic and unnatural mixture of desert palms, succulents, and spreading deciduous trees, with a rocky mountainous landscape in the background, possibly representing future pleasures and trials. The youth gestures toward a pale castle in the sky, surrounded by a giant halo. The castle, more pronounced in the second series where a stray branch also "points" toward it, recalls the mythological sky chariot in Poussin's *The Kingdom of Flora* (n.d.) and represented the heavenly kingdom. The river winds around the woodland and heads toward the rocks in a symbolic move into the trials of adulthood, confirmed in *Manhood* as the adult is borne on rapids through a rocky chasm, with recourse only to prayer: the angelic figurehead here serves as a surrogate for the guard-

ian angel. Finally, in *Old Age* the boat arrives on calm but dark waters, its white-haired occupant in prayer, while the guardian angel reappears, gesticulating toward the brilliant "Haven of Immortal Life" signified by further angelic figures.

The series thus conflates an imagery of a pioneering struggle against nature (albeit nature of a rarified kind) with that of Christian spiritual trials. *The Voyage of Life* was enormously popular, contributing to the fact that when Cole died, he was the most celebrated artist in America. A memorial exhibition of the series in 1848 drew a half-million visitors, and engravings of *The Voyage of Life* were to be found in domestic parlors all over America (Wallach 1977: 234; Hughes 1997: 150). *The Voyage of Life*, drawing on the Hudson Valley wilderness and incorporating well-known Christian emblems, established a powerful and popular symbolism of pioneering valor and Christian fortitude in which Americans clearly recognized an image of themselves.

HUDSON VIEWS AND RIVERSIDE LEISURE

Hudson River School art, as we have seen, presented a natural image of America that was endowed with Christian "spirituality" and encouraged a pioneering expansion toward far horizons. However, not all Hudson riverscapes embodied such grandiose aims. Although the Hudson River School drew most attention from contemporaries, as well as from subsequent historians, many riverscapes were produced that were not by "members" of the Hudson River School, or that diverged from the dominant ethos. Riverscapes of the Hudson were popular from the early nineteenth century.[16] As well as paintings, a large industry in engravings and lithographic prints of the Hudson River developed over the nineteenth century and photographic views became common later. The hallmark of Hudson River School art was its depiction of wilderness scenery in a sublime style. However many Hudson views, whether for common use or designed for exhibition, were neither unpopulated nor sublime. There was a variety of riverscapes in different media all designed to show

16. Until this time, portraiture was the dominant art form, while the history painting popular in Europe was less successful in the United States (Lassiter 1978: x).

off the attributes of the Hudson and its function as a pleasurable and wealthy place to live and to visit, and I will briefly discuss some examples below.

Thus *Hudson River Scene* (fig. 4), a circular riverscape of about 1850 painted in oil on wood by an anonymous American artist for the top of a keg (Howat, *Hudson River and Its Painters* 150), is an engaging piece of naïve art representing a section of the Hudson as a blue pool surrounded by detached houses, a castle, and a church, amid trees with prominent bulrushes and oversized geese, a neat and self-contained little idyll without a far horizon to disturb its tranquility.

Fig. 4. Unknown artists, *Hudson River Scenes*, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Museum Purchase. Reprinted by permission.

Outing on the Hudson (ca. 1875; fig. 5), possibly showing the Catskills, was again painted by an anonymous American artist in a naïve style, and it shows a similar bounded scene where well-dressed adults and children walk and converse on a grassy knoll edged with a variety of trees next to the water (Little 1957: 92; Howat 1972: 157).

Fig. 5. Unknown artists, *Hudson River Scenes*, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Museum Purchase. Reprinted by permission.

The hills in the background are not shown in aerial perspective, but in saturated green and blue-green much like the foreground, so that again there is little sense of an expansive horizon. W.J. Bennett in 1831 produced an engraving from his own painting *West Point from Phillipstown* in which a pair of contented goats and varied flora occupy the foreground, and a section of the river, full of boats, is surrounded protectively by wooded hills; although a gap in the hills indicates where the river flows from the highlands, the river is concealed at that point, so that the focus of the picture remains on fore and middle ground.

William Guy Wall, an Irish immigrant who had arrived in America the same year as Cole, painted a series of watercolors of the Hudson, reproduced as aquatints by John Hill under the title *Hudson River Port Folio* (1828). Wall's text deliberately highlighted the properties of the rich landowners who could afford to buy his product

(see Boime 1991: 28–34). Thomas Doughty, whose work Cole first admired in the 1820s, was typically commissioned by wealthy Americans to depict their estates (Minks 1989: 9, 20). Thus Doughty's *Autumn on the Hudson* (1850) focuses on a house nestling by the water, with fine autumnal trees framing the river and a domestic group of woman, child, and pet dog; the scene is present-orientated with the Hudson constituting a pleasant view for the house rather than pointing to any distant utopia.

Colored drawings of the Hudson Valley by the English watercolorist William Henry Bartlett were engraved for a volume entitled *American Scenery: or, Land, Lake, and River Illustrations of Transatlantic Nature* (Willis 1840) published in London and New York. Bartlett's riverscapes were topographical views with towns, villages, riverside mansions, and parks, often populated with visitors, the river filled with sailing boats; for the most part these are not sublime wilderness views. For example, Bartlett's *Albany* depicts the town on the hill across the busy Hudson, with carefully drawn flora focusing attention on the foreground banks. William Hart's slightly later riverscape of the same place, *Albany, New York, from Bath* (oil on canvas, 1846), showed the town across the river through a line of summer trees with the focus on the river and trees that cut across the canvas and beyond that on the buildings rising up the banks. Hyde Park by the Hudson was the site of "several very pretty country seats" admired by visitors such as James Silk Buckingham, founder of the *Athenaeum* (1838; see Van Zandt 1992: 221, 228) and where Harriet Martineau recorded seeing "some pleasant society" (1835; see Van Zandt 1992: 215); Bartlett's *View from Hyde Park (Hudson River)* depicts a parklike area with a smooth grass verge edged with trees where a family grouping with children sit on a bench and chair or on the lawn, overlooking a calm riverscape milling with sailing boats. *View from Ruggle's House, Newburgh (Hudson River)* frames the river, again filled with small boats, with a grand portico, one of its columns encircled with a vine. In Bartlett's *Villa on the Hudson, near Weehawken* the vision of men gazing from a height across the river terminates not in a magnificent horizon but with a large colonnaded villa on the cliff.

His *Undercliff Near Cold Spring*, as Willis's accompanying text points out, depicts the seat of General George P. Morris, on the eastern bank of the Hudson where "the selection of such a commanding and beautiful position at once decides the taste of its intellectual proprietor" (1840: 19). Morris was a poet who celebrated the Hudson in his verse, and editor of the *New York Mirror*, a weekly paper that "circulates more extensively among the élite than any other periodical in the country" (Willis 1840: 20), and his connections with the Hudson as a wealthy resident, writer, and influential editor and as the subject of visual art was not uncommon.

Comparing such images with riverscapes in the elevated style of the Hudson River School serves to demonstrate the ideological character of the sublime riverscapes and far horizons of the more celebrated works, which were sometimes deliberately constructed out of diverse views to produce a harmonious and awe-inspiring whole. For example, we can compare *View of Troy* (ca. 1850; fig. 6), attributed to Asher Brown Durand and later to William Richardson Tyler,[17] with *View near Lansingburgh, Looking Toward Troy, on the River* (ca. 1850; fig. 7), attributed to James McDougal Hart. Whereas Tyler's picture focuses on a distant view of the river, framed by even more distant pale hills on the horizon, Hart's painting shows the river as a scene of pleasure enjoyed by a top-hatted gentleman driving a phaeton followed by a smartly attired gentleman and lady on horseback with their pet dog running alongside, a picture of the affluent classes at leisure.[18] The figures and horses may

17. *View of Troy* is attributed to Durand by John K. Howat (1972: 183, plate 88). Tammis K. Groft has informed me that this painting was purchased by Albany Institute of History and Art in 1950 from the John Levy Galleries, New York City, as *View of Troy by Asher B. Durand* but that in 1990 the museum reattributed the painting to William Richardson Tyler (Tammis K. Groft, Albany Institute of History and Art, personal communication, 27 Aug. 2008). A date of ca. 1850 has recently been suggested for the picture, based on information provided by E. Walter Wheeler (Tammis K. Groft, personal communication, 28 and 29 Aug. 2008).

18. *View near Lansingburgh* is also known as *The Burden Family Enjoying the Hudson River Near Troy* and dated ca. 1860; Mr. Burden was a wealthy manufacturer in Troy (A.H. Jones 1958: 48).

Fig. 6. William RIchardson Tyler, *View of Troy, on the River*, ca. 1850. Oil on canvas; 23 5/8 × 39 1/4 in. (60 × 99,7 cm). Albany Institute of History and Art, 1950.3. Reprinted by permission.

Fig. 7. James Hart, *View near Lansingburgh, Looking toward Troy, on the River*, ca. 1850. Oil on canvas; 36 1/4 × 54 in. (92 × 137,2 cm). Albany Institute of History and Art, 1943.8. Reprinted by permission.

have been painted by Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait, known for his sporting scenes (A.H. Jones 1958: 48). In *View of Troy* the riverscape is framed by a forest in rich autumnal coloring typical of the Hudson Valley, the town of Troy is represented by its church steeples, and the whole is lit by a pink and gold-tinted sky, so that the scene is one of unity and harmony, the river wending into a distant horizon of hills toward the sea. *View of Troy* can also be compared to Durand's pupil John William Casilear's less well-known summer scene *Upper Hudson River Landscape*, which has a similar format of tree-covered hill overlooking the distant river, but lacks the golden coloring and the focus on the horizon. While intimate views of leisure focused on present pleasure, or hilltop views like Casilear's presented a pleasant scene, *View of Troy* presented an allegory of the future, a necessary ingredient of a nationalist art, especially in the United States, and it was such riverscapes that became hegemonic as the image of the nation.

"A WHITE MAN'S COUNTRY" NATIVE AMERICANS AND HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL ART

This American nationalist project depended on the processes of exclusion that typically characterize national identity formation. I want to focus here especially on the symbolic exclusion of Native Americans furthered by official art and, I suggest, in riverscapes of the Hudson River School. Ernest Gellner has argued that national identity depends on cultural homogeneity (1983: 138, 141), but cultural homogeneity has often been achieved through a process of exclusions and even genocide. The French historian Gérard Prunier has stated that "the first modern genocide was that of the American Indians" (1995: 238). The new nation debarred women from full citizenship, enslaved black people, and allowed "the genocidal clearance of Indian tribes from their lands" (Foley 1991: 24). Hastings has raised the question of whether "the whole nationalist notion of an 'exclusively chosen' people from Israel on [was] inherently prone to genocide" (1999: 381, 395), and for Native Americans, perceived as savages, the outcome of European settlement was indeed genocide. The reasons for the persecution and misrepresentation of Native Americans

were to be found partly in the belief of waves of new settlers that America was their Promised Land, together with the working out of nationalist ideology. Such ideology was supported by the riverscapes of the Hudson River School that perpetuated the imagining of the brave Christian explorer/settler and the savage native.

Thus Cole described Indians as almost bestially savage (1836: 3), and he painted a version of the popular captivity theme entitled *Indian Sacrifice* (1827) in which a pleading white woman is about to be slaughtered by Indians in a wilderness setting of rocks and dead trees.[19] Alternatively, Hudson River School paintings showed the land as abandoned by Native Americans, as in Cole's *View of the Round-Top*, or they were confined to the margins of the riverscape as if lacking the pilgrim's or the pioneer's ability or will to progress, or simply included as picturesque ornaments. Not only Hudson River School painters but subsequent art historical scholars have colluded in the symbolic marginalization of Native Americans in the national riverscape. For example, a quite recent historian of Cole's work has observed uncritically that in his *Falls of Kaaterskill* (1826) "Cole placed an Indian in the center of the composition to suggest the primitive, unspoiled quality of the setting as well as to give scale to the seemingly limitless spaces" (Baigell 1998: 32). This reading no doubt meets Cole's purpose but typically glosses over the subtext of the work, the relegation of Native Americans and the implication for the construction of national identity.

When the English explorer Henry Hudson reached the river in 1609, which he called "River of the Mountains" after its Algonquin name (Sylvester 1877: 37), ten thousand Indians lived along its banks. By the late eighteenth century they had been decimated by wars, disease, and persecution, while others had sold or lost their lands and migrated westward. Some of the main tribes in the Hudson

19. Asher Brown Durand in a public address at Springfield Presbyterian Church in 1817 spoke rousingly of "the groans of your murdered brethren under all the agonies of the ruthless tomahawk and scalping-knife" and of avenging the "fair daughters of America" (qtd. in Durand 2007: 32). The theme of Indian savagery/European female captivity became an established motif of art and literature (Fryd 1987: 25–33).

Valley had originally migrated east from the West, the later white progress westward being a mirror image of this migration. One group had come from the "western part of the American continent" believing they were destined by the "Great Spirit" to settle in the Hudson region (Ruttenber 1971: 45–47; see also Dunn 2000: 161); this was their chosen land. In the early nineteenth century there were still Mahican (or Mohican) families living along the Hudson although the Indian Removal Act of 1830 ensured further migration west (Scheckel 1998: 101–102). Around this time, Robert W. Weir's popular riverscape *The Landing of Henry Hudson* (ca. 1838) depicted Hudson's sailing ship, the *Half Moon*, lying at anchor, bathed in white light. Indians overlooking the river stand amid dead and blasted trees, while two of the smaller figures gesture in supplication. The message here seems to be that Hudson's landing was accepted because the Indians subsisted in a dead land, awaiting revitalization by the white man. Yet the Dutch who arrived in the area in the 1600s had been impressed by the fertility of the soil, the "sweetness of the air," and the Indians' prosperity (Dunn 2000: 13, 15).

Until the 1780s, the American colonies were popularly designated by American and European artists by "a somewhat romanticized [American] Indian princess" as in John Dixon's *The Oracle* (1774) (Colley 1996: 141). At the same time, she is depicted in the shadows as a savage with primitive weaponry. Linda Colley, for whom the figure evoked the "noble savage," suggests that this portrayal depended on the fact that "[the] white inhabitants had yet to evolve a recognizable and autonomous identity" (141). Even if this were so, the Indian princess is used in a way long typical of allegorical female figures; that is, she represented a power with which she could not possibly be associated in actuality (Warner 1987: xx). Native American culture was officially perceived as both heathen and savage, and from the Revolution to the Civil War, "the United States became more conspicuously and self-consciously a white man's country" (Parish 2003: 8). The US House Committee on Indian Affairs in 1818 reported that "[i]n the present state of our country one of two things seem [*sic*] to be necessary, either that those sons of the forest should be *moralized or exterminated*" (Gibbons 2000: 210, my emphasis).

A major cultural symbol of the new nation was the US Capitol, reconstructed from 1825, and an important theme of Capitol art was the relations between Euro-Americans and Indians (Scheckel 1998: 129). In this discourse, American Indian males were cast as savages.[20] White women, meanwhile, were either depicted as allegorical figures or appeared as "the helpless victim who requires and reveals the virtue and strength of the heroic Euro-American male" (139), as in Horatio Greenough's marble statue *The Rescue* (1837–50; fig. 8), installed in 1853 at the top of steps to the portico.[21]

Fig. 8. Horatio Greenough, *The Rescue*, Architect of the Capitol. Reprinted by permission.

20. Causici's *Conflict of Daniel Boone and the Indians* (the US Capitol, 1826–1827, South Door) was described as "contrasting the cool intrepidity of the hero with the ferocity of the savage" in Jonathan Elliot, *Guide-book to the US Capitol*, 1830 (Scheckel 1998: 137).

21. *The Rescue* was installed by Robert Mills in 1853, after Greenough's death (1852). It was removed from the Capitol for building work in 1958 and never reinstated; in 1976 it was broken while being moved by crane and is now stored in fragments (Fryd 1987: 17, 20).

A review of this work in the *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* (1851) noted "the ferocious and destructive instinct of the savage, and his easy subjugation under the *superior manhood* of the new colonist" (qtd. in Fryd 1987: 34, my emphasis). For European-Americans in the nineteenth century, then, the Indian signified an aggressive or unmanly "savage" failing to match the vigor or the valor of the Euro-American male.

In contrast to Weir's riverscape demarcating Hudson's ship from the space occupied by the Indians, an illustration in Edward M. Ruttenber's *History of the Indian Tribes of Hudson's River* (1872), entitled *The Half Moon off Yonkers*, shows Hudson's ship close inshore being approached by a number of peaceable Indian canoes, while groups of dignified Indians watch from the adjacent cliffs and rocks; in the foreground, a border of fresh leaves represents a green and fertile land. Ruttenber was a well-known local historian and publisher based in Newburgh on the Hudson River. His history was an attempt to correct the stereotypes of Hudson Valley Indians as "primitive savages" using "original sources of information" given that, as Ruttenber says, "the history of the Indians who occupied the valley of Hudson's river [had] never been written" (1971: iii).[22] His account showed them to have a sophisticated and democratic way of life, and his conclusions are well supported by later historical studies of the river Indians, for example, by Shirley W. Dunn (2000). He discusses the three "great divisions or nations" represented in the Hudson Valley, the Iroquois, the Mahicans, and the Lenni Lenapes or Delawares, and describes the Indians' well-built houses and elaborate clothing (Ruttenber 1971: 8–9, 21–22, 35). Dunn draws attention also to the varied diet of the Hudson Valley Indians, and their uses of the river not only to fish, but to cultivate maize, beans, and squash in its rich alluvial soil (15, 27–28). Much of the cultivation and food storage was organized by women, who were also landholders. However Dunn argues that "once Christianity took hold [women] lost their tribal prominence in land transactions. This was encouraged particularly

22. There had been many attempts to account for the origins of the Native Americans, including an account by James Adair (1775), who lived among them for thirty years and believed them to be "descendants of the Israelites, the lost tribes" (Ruttenber 1971: 16).

by the English, who were uncomfortable with women as landholders" (2000: 19, 271). Ruttenber notes with approval the Indians' democratic structures for regulating tribal life, and even holds up the decision-making practices of the Lenapes as an exemplar of that cherished "balancing principle" of the American Constitution: "In the government of the Lenapes the perfect liberty of the people was the fundamental law, and absolute unanimity the only recognized expression of the popular will. A more perfect system of checks and balances the wisdom of civilized nations has not devised" (Ruttenber 1971: 47). Even for Ruttenber, however, the Indians' religion was not quite on a level with that of his own society: "As the term is generally understood, they had no religion, but in its place a rude system in which they looked 'through nature up to nature's God'" (27).

Despite accounts such as Ruttenber's, America in the nineteenth century was reinvented as "empty territory" and Native Americans were effectively unrepresented, and this vacancy and occlusion were key factors in the definition of an American identity. For example, the discovery of the sources of the Hudson by two American geologists in 1837 has been taken to represent the earliest finding regardless of the history and knowledge of Native Americans living along the river (Van Zandt 1992: 239).[23] W.J.T. Mitchell commented that landscape functioned as the "'dreamwork' of imperialism" (1994: 10) and in the United States visual depictions of the land—drawing and painting—typically involved the erasure of Native American culture. Joshua Shaw, an English émigré landscape painter in the 1820s, commented that "America only, of all the countries of civilized man, is unsung and undescribed" (qtd. in Barringer 2002: 43). The riverscapes of the Hudson River School, as well as the many views of the riverside estates owned by elite New Yorkers, clearly contributed to this symbolic erasure.

A FUTURE-ORIENTED NATIONALISM: THE SETTLED RIVERSCAPE

Constructing a national history for the United States was problematic insofar as its past was tainted by the suppression

23. The Hudson's highest source, Lake Tear of the Clouds, was found in 1872 (Howat 1972: 53).

of the Native Americans as well as interwoven with the struggle for independence, although Susan-Mary Grant believes that "the search for a usable past is one of the defining features of American national construction" (1998: 178).[24] There was some attempt to invoke a European classical heritage, with such popular works as Hiram Powers's marble statue *The Greek Slave* (ca. 1843), which although a female nude managed to acquire religious symbolism and a chaste reputation as "the triumph of Christian virtue" (Hughes 1997: 218). However classicism declined in popularity from the 1820s (Perry 1993: 55), especially as the value of indigenous, that is, American representations grew. Between 1840 and 1860 waves of paintings of Columbus and scenes of exploration and discovery were exhibited in New York and elsewhere. Columbus was portrayed as the model for the pioneer, taking Christianity and civilization into new lands, providing a parallel for contemporary ambitions. Luigi Persico's statue *Discovery of America*, installed at the Capitol in 1844 and a companion piece to Greenough's *Rescue*, looked back to Columbus, who is shown clothed in armor, although with a classical drape, and holding aloft a globe as he strides past a nearly naked Indian woman (see Fryd 1997: 20–21, 24). This national monument once more represented the necessary triumph of European "civilization" over Native American "savagery."

There were other efforts to construct a national history with appropriate myths and symbols drawing on the Founding Fathers for legitimacy and later, paradoxically, on the Civil War.[25] However, the very brevity of this past deemed usable meant that it depended on the invocation of recent historical figures, and, however mythologized, they could not be so malleable for nationalist purposes as mythical characters or more distant historical figures. For contemporary analysts, and later historians comparing America with Europe, the nation seemed to have arisen quickly, and necessarily "most backward glances extended only a short way,

24. Peter Parish goes further and calls the idea that nineteenth-century Americans were not interested in their national past a dangerous fallacy (2003: 10).

25. Both North and South in the Civil War looked back to the Revolution as the basis for their claims for union or for secession (Grant 1998: 170).

to the supposedly simpler communities of a generation before or, at most, to Puritan villages" (Perry 1993: 61; see also Hudson 1970: xix; Tuveson 1980: 156). This neglect of history compared to Europe arguably led to a kind of lopsidedness in American nationalism compared to European nationalisms, that is, an over-emphasis on the future at the expense of the past, together with a perceived ability to move into the future unencumbered by custom. There was consequently an emphasis as we have seen on the heroic forward-moving actions of explorers and pioneers, associated with a focus on the natural scene as a metaphor for the country and its future. As Willis commented, "His [the American's] mind, as he tracks the broad rivers of his own country, is perpetually reaching forward" (qtd. in Boime 1991: 55). According to John L. O'Sullivan in 1845, it was America's Manifest Destiny "to overspread and to possess the whole continent which providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government" (Foley 1991: 184). The myth of Manifest Destiny, that the land was inexhaustible and would progressively be transformed into an Edenic pastoral landscape, could only be sustained by continually exploiting new territory, and the Hudson served as a symbol of this movement.

Albert Memmi has described "the colonizer" as "a tall man, bronzed by the sun […] he rivets his gaze far away on the horizon of his land. When not engaged in battles against nature, we think of him laboring selflessly for mankind […] spreading culture to the nonliterate. In other words, his pose is one of a noble adventurer, a righteous pioneer" (1990: 69). The colonizer or pioneer possessed what Boime has termed the "magisterial gaze," which he argues was to be found in American painting from the 1820s to the 1860s: "the perspective of the American on the heights searching for new worlds to conquer […] The magisterial gaze embodied the exaltation of a cultured American elite before the illimitable horizon that they identified with the destiny of the American nation" (1991: 21, 38). This gaze contrasted with what Boime termed the "reverential gaze," looking upward, found in North European painting (21). The possessor of the magisterial gaze was positioned on an eminence commanding a vast expanse of country, and in mid-century it was believed that "only daring and insolent men"

climbed mountains, while "savages" would not for fear of spirits inhabiting the mountaintop (Thoreau, qtd. in Boime 1991: 19). The magisterial gaze was fixed on the future; it was related to surveyance, collecting data for mapping, and surveillance, or visual superintendence (150). There was of course another kind of looking, that of Native Americans who viewed the land as a communal benefit, with relatively unfixed boundaries, but the magisterial gaze belonged to the Anglo-European American male: the pilgrim, pioneer, artist, politician, and industrialist. The magisterial gaze is implied in many riverscapes by Hudson River School artists, for instance Durand's *View of Troy, New York* (1877). It can also be seen in Cole's work, but there as noted the gaze is more complicated.

American national identity has been intimately bound up with encountering and colonizing the wilderness, which in turn was associated with the concept of freedom.[26] However there remained an inherent conflict between associating American identity with the wilderness as found, or aligning it with civilized settlement. This conflict was resolved by the formula that "[t]he wilderness revealed the work and hand of God [but] the domestication of the landscape represented the American people working out God's plan on the continent" (Baigell 1998: 10). During the 1830s–40s, land was still rapidly being acquired and exploited for commercial development, and thousands of miles of canals and railways were laid (19); by 1850, the North had developed a powerful network of financial and commercial organizations. The concept of liberty and American identity increasingly became associated with economic advance and individual social progress.

In 1835, Cole had already noted the passing of the wilderness (Barringer 2002: 52). When Cole and others started painting the Hudson, it was being developed for tourism,[27] and he found

26. Frederick Jackson Turner argued that it was the condition of frontier settlements "advancing against a wilderness" that resulted in America's peculiar attachment to the principle of liberty, although the notion of liberty was also associated with English constitutional precedents and brought to America by British settlers (see, for example, Foley 1991: 19). Turner expounded his "frontier thesis" at the Columbian World Exposition of 1893, during a meeting of the American Historical Association (Boime 1991: 3).

27. A scheduled passenger steamboat service had begun in 1807–1808, the first river steamboat anywhere (Van Zandt 1992: 151; J. Jones 2002: 12).

the Hudson River Valley also becoming despoiled by noisy sawmills and scorched fields. Cole's conservative political sympathies were with the landowners and rural communities rather than with the democratic "modernizers" (51, 104). His series of five paintings of 1836, *The Course of Empire*, however, was commissioned by a well-known self-made city entrepreneur, Luman Reed. It showed the emergence and eclipse of an imperial city in a fictional setting based on the Hudson estuary, and it demonstrates the contemporary ambivalence of attitudes toward the "wilderness" and "civilization." The overall theme of the series is clearly human *vanitas*, a Christian theme as well as a persistent motif of European art. However, there are admonitory political references for contemporary American society, based on a dislike of urban-commercial development. Cole described the city as depicted in *The Consummation of Empire* as "à la mode New York." In this American morality tale, Native Americans feature only in the prehistory of "civilized man." Thus in the first picture, *The Savage State*, Indian occupation is pushed back to the context of a primitive and mythical dawn. Exhibited in New York, the series was celebrated as "the prototype of a truly American art that blasted away the effeminacies of European painting" (J. Jones 2002: 13).

However, by mid-century a more pastoral version of American landscape was being cultivated and associated with an ideal, civilized republic. The domestication of the landscape accommodated a strong notion of property ownership and fitted well with contemporary economic developments. There was an increase in scenes of modern tourism, boating, and picnics, such as Robert Havell Jr.'s *West Point from Fort Putnam* (ca. 1848) in which three figures dressed for an outing gaze from the ruined fort at the top of a sheer cliff clearly not attained by arduous climbing, while their view of the river is visually terminated by Bannerman's Island. In the more ambitious riverscapes of the Hudson River School, imagery was carefully crafted to present a "moral narrative" of progress in an Arcadian setting, while the style was an academic "transparent" one designed to appeal to both art collectors and a wide public. Cropsey's *View of Catskills Across Hudson* (1877) shows cattle heading to drink in the water, a rus-

tic couple under a spreading tree, the whole suffused in golden sunlight. As the notion of liberty increasingly became associated with economic and social progress, riverscapes from mid-century also incorporated an idealized colonizing trajectory from "wilderness" to pastoral scenery to urban and technological development, as for instance in Durand's *Progress* (1853). This painting, described as "an idealized Hudson River-like view," was praised by a contemporary critic as "purely American. It tells an American story […] portrayed with true American feeling by a devoted and earnest student of nature" (qtd. in Lawall 1978: 96). It contrasted of course with Cole's vision in *The Course of Empire* of a cyclical return to nature. In *Progress* the signs of technological and industrial advancement on the riverbanks are observed by a group of Native Americans: in this case, the gaze from a height is theirs, but their confinement in a small wilderness setting seems to preclude any subsequent movement toward the future horizon. Cropsey's large canvas *Autumn—On the Hudson River* (1860; fig. 9), executed on the eve

Fig. 9. Jasper Francis Cropsey, *Autumn—On the Hudson River*, 1860. National Gallery of Art. https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.46474.html (Open Access license).

of the Civil War, depicted a trajectory similar to that of *Progress*. Very different from Doughty's *Autumn on the Hudson* (1850) discussed earlier, Cropsey's picture is structured so that the stream and river provide the metaphorical means of progress toward a brilliant and golden horizon. Although there is a township and a paddle-steamer on the river, the extensive riverscape is barely disturbed by its human occupants. Cropsey had been living

in London since 1856 and he executed *Autumn—On the Hudson River* there. As American scenery for a London audience, Cropsey drew attention to the vastness of the landscape, its atmospheric clarity (presumably in contrast to London smog), and the brilliance of autumnal color, which like the Hudson became peculiarly identified with America at this time. However, this is no longer the wilderness, but a rather Arcadian present, looking toward a golden future.

CONCLUSION

Many Hudson riverscapes in nineteenth-century America celebrated the riverside estates and leisure pursuits of the wealthy. However, the riverscapes that became hegemonic as images of America were those of a small group of artists associated with the English painter Thomas Cole and dubbed the Hudson River School. These riverscapes were distinguished by a sublime style and a focus on the Hudson Valley as an expansive wilderness. Just as the Hudson riverscapes that depicted wealthy white Americans and their estates overlooked the history and existing cultures of the Hudson River Indians, so the image of the wilderness riverscape in Hudson River School art symbolically erased Native Americans by presenting the Hudson Valley as empty territory, apart from the occasional ornamental Indian figure. Such riverscapes also invited allegorical and Christian readings invoking, for instance, the biblical wilderness or the spiritual quest of the pilgrim, or they symbolized the "civilized" settlement of the wilderness by the pioneer. The urban spectator was able to identify with the pilgrim-pioneer and his quest by means of imaginatively sharing a journey along the river and toward the distant horizon.

The wilderness, staged as an object of nostalgia, still plays an important role in American culture, symbolized, for example, by the western in film and by the national parks (Short 1991: 178–196; Barringer 2002: 65). Hudson River School art provided images of a putatively authentic American riverscape, initiating a vision of American scenery that would then be pursued westward across the Mississippi. John Gast's *American Progress* (1872) showed a westward trail of settlers spreading from the Hudson

River, Indians fleeing ahead. A giant airborne female personification of America accompanies the migrants, stringing telegraph wire along the route (fig. 10). In Gast's picture, the pastoral idyll that supplanted the wilderness gives way to a technological symbolism; technology finally sees off the Native Americans and the new America is allegorized, not as an American Indian, but as a white woman.

Fig. 10. John Gast, *American Progress*, 1872. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:American_Progress_(John_Gast_painting).jpg. This file has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighboring rights.

The starting point for Gast's narrative is the confluence of the Hudson and the East rivers. If the projected Golden Age finally lay in the West, the prototype was based on the Hudson, and it was the riverscape of the Hudson River School that provided and still represents a potent image of America as a bountiful, but exclusive wilderness.

The Hudson River had an umbilical link to New York, the contemporary artistic and cultural center of America, and the Hudson River School artists owed their success and their celebrity to powerful patronage in the city that allowed them to promulgate their grandiose vision for the nation. Drawing on the discourse of America as a Promised Land, they created the American wilderness based on the Hudson River Valley and projected onto this setting America's future Golden Age as a settled Eden. The discourse of chosenness drew on English precedents, and Cole himself was

a recent English immigrant and fervent Christian. Such riverscapes helped to constitute an enduring imagery of the national 'homeland' and a potent idea of national identity based on the dynamic figure of the Christian pioneer-pilgrim. As the pioneer merged with the entrepreneur, the riverscape embodied his magisterial, future-oriented gaze, a gaze with which the prosperous urban patrons and clients of Hudson River School art easily identified.

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"FIRST IN TIME, FIRST IN RIGHT"

Indigenous Self-Determination in the Colorado River Basin

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On September 30, 1935, President Franklin Roosevelt took the stage perched thousands of feet above the Colorado River to address an expectant crowd celebrating the newly completed Boulder Dam.[1] In his informal remarks prior to his speech, Roosevelt exclaimed, "This morning I came, I saw and I was conquered, as everyone would be who sees for the first time this great feat of mankind" ("Dedication"). Flanked by one of the world's great engineering marvels, Roosevelt praised the human industry and ingenuity that finally controlled this "turbulent, dangerous river," which, left unrestrained, "added little of value to the region this dam serves" ("Dedication"). With these words, the president opened an era of frenzied dam building along the Colorado and throughout the West as the US Bureau of Reclamation, the federal organization created in 1902 to redeem the region's desert landscapes, engineered into existence the expansive water infrastruce that today supports the region's burgeoning cities and economies.[2]

1. Boulder Dam was renamed Hoover Dam in 1947. I would like to thank the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies for a 2020 fellowship that supported my research for and writing of an early version of this article.

2. The Bureau was first known as the United States Reclamation Service. The name changed to its current form in 1923, a year after Congress approved the Colorado River Compact, which would become the foundational document for Colorado River policy and management between the states, Mexico, and Indian tribal nations.

This "great feat of mankind" and its offspring have benefitted and continue to pay dividends to countless individuals in and out of the American Southwest. However, the efforts to reclaim the arid West have also brought the Colorado less welcome notoriety. As Marc Reisner famously observed in *Cadillac Desert*, his classic treatise on western water development, because the Colorado "has more people, more industry, and a more significant economy dependent on it than any comparable river in the world," it has become "the most legislated, most debated, and most litigated river in the entire world" (1986: 120). Thirty-five after Reisner penned these words, the situation along the Colorado today has only intensified as a result of a decades-long drought, the increasingly alarming effects of climate change, and the growing clamor among the river's many stakeholders to solidify their claims to the river.[3]

For the Colorado River Basin's Indigenous communities seeking their slice of the Colorado within this complex matrix of competing interests and growing environmental concerns, the struggle has been immense. While Boulder Dam overwhelmed Roosevelt through its sheer awe and magnificence, its conquering effect has extended to the tribes as this icon of western conquest facilitated the colonization of the arid West and the further removal of tribes from their historic use and access to natural resources. Notwithstanding the foundational 1908 Supreme Court ruling in *Winters v. United States*, which granted tribes water rights based on the date of their reservation's creation and, in many cases, made them the most senior water rights holders in the region, the West's water governance approach based on a "first in time, first in right principle" tended to benefit non-native water users.[4]

3. Beginning in 2000, the Colorado has been mired in what the US Department of the Interior has described as a "historic, extended drought" ("Drought"). Terms such as "megadrought" and "hot drought" are now used by scientists to describe what appears to be the new normal in the Basin (Williams, et. Al 2020; Udall and Overpeck 2017). These current realites combine to create significant stress within the system that directly supports approximately 40 million people in the United States and Mexico.

4. "First in time, first in right" articulates the approach that the prior appropriation doctrine, the system of water governance in the arid West, takes to allocating water rights. The Winters ruling was upheld in the 1964 *Arizona v. California* decree which quantified water allocations to a number

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Thus, despite their literal embodiment as the "first in time, first in right" users through the West, the tribes have historically lacked the means by which to perfect or develop those rights whereas settler communities, often aided by state and federal dollars, have controlled many of the West's waterways and their development. As a result, the Colorado River's colonization has compromised tribes' ability to exert their water sovereignty.

This article seeks to decolonize Colorado Basin water knowledge by reassessing the "first in time, first in right" dictum that has long shaped Indigenous water practices in the region. To do so, I bring Indigenous knowledge about the Colorado River Basin and the natural world more broadly out of the mainstream's obscurity to reposition these perspectives at the foreground of the region's water cultures. This decolonization employs Dina Gilio-Whitaker's call for "indigenizing environmental justice" to examine a number of texts representing various tribal affiliations and genres to consider how their particular use of narrative engages the historic and ongoing environmental injustices they have faced and continue to negotiate in their fight to preserve their sacred lands, identity, and access to reliable, clean water (2019: 26). Such a decolonization occurs through these texts' use of narrative to work within and against the scientific and instrumental discourses and their respective genres that have traditionally constructed and dictated mainstream Colorado River knowledge and activity.[5] In essence this discursive manipulation establishes the texts' "rhetorical sovereignty," what Scott Lyons defines as "the inherent right and ability of *peoples* to determine their own communicative needs and desires in this pursuit, to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse" (449).

The rhetorical sovereignty these Indigenous voices claim not only demonstrates their expertise in addressing current water

of the Lower Basin's tribal nations according to their priority dates. See *Arizona v. California* section II for quantification details.

5. Rhetorician Walter Beale identifies instrumental discourse by its "governance, guidance, control, or execution of human activities. It includes such specific products as contracts, constitutions, laws, technical reports, and manuals of operation" (1987: 94).

issues but their ability to exert their "Indigenous eco-agency" to challenge the status quo and offer their own solutions rooted within their respective experiences and traditions (Adamson and Monani 2017: 9). And narrative—the stories of these traditions and connections to land and water—is central to Indigenous sovereignty both in terms of the language used to address environmental concerns and on-the-ground efforts to control resources. As Cree scholar Stephanie Fitzgerald argues in her assessment of Indigenous women's writing about land dispossession and environmental justice, "It is narrative that creates the representation of the dispossessed, challenges the hegemonic invisibility of Native land dispossession in all its forms, and disseminates potentially useful and strategic counternarratives" (2015: 15). To understand how tribes are currently asserting their water sovereignty through narrative within the Colorado Basin, I first turn to a discussion of indigenous environmental justice to establish the grounds upon which these narratives operate. Then, I examine how the "Colorado River Ten Tribes Partnership Tribal Water Study" (2018; henceforth "Water Study") and the Grand Canyon Trust's "The Voices of Grand Canyon" use narrative to shed greater light on the essential cultural, spiritual, and economic relationships the Basin's nations and tribes have with the Colorado River. Through these counternarratives to the West's dominant water ideologies and cultures, the Basin's tribal nations draw attention to past and ongoing struggles to secure equitable water access while amplifying their resilience and self-determination.

INDIGENIZING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Over the last couple of decades, numerous scholars and activists in the environmental humanities have attended to the countless manifestations of environmental injustice playing out across the globe. Those working at the intersections of Indigenous and environmental studies have amplified the understanding of environmental justice and the ways in which its historic roots in the Civil Rights movement and current focus on issues of racial and economic parity fail to fully describe the environmental injustices plaguing Indigenous communities in North

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America and beyond.[6] For example, Dina Gilio-Whitaker (Colville Confederated Tribes) and Kyle Powys Whyte (Potawatomi) define environmental justice for Indigenous peoples as equal access to the earth's material resources and also to its spiritual elements which comprise essential components of Indigenous identity. Their respective arguments for "indigenizing environmental justice," as Gilio-Whitaker put it, suggest a significant reorientation for how dominant culture envisions human-earth relations and posit needed directives for reimagining Colorado River water use in the twenty-first century (2019: 26). Gilio-Whitaker contends that the traditional notions of environmental justice are rooted in colonizing systems, which have negatively shaped Indigenous cultures:

> the underlying assumptions of environmental injustice as it is commonly understood and deployed are grounded in racial and economic terms and defined by norms of distributive justice within a capitalist framework. Indigenous peoples' pursuit of environmental justice (EJ) requires the use of a different lens, one with a scope that can accommodate the full weight of the history of settler colonialism, on one hand, and embrace differences in the ways Indigenous peoples view land and nature, on the other. (12)

Under this alternative vision of environmental justice, the equitable access to natural resources is only the beginning of a more just future for Indigenous peoples. Rather, an Indigenized environmental justice accounts for the basic ideologies that have compromised equitable access to those resources and embraces alternative epistemologies, such as those reflective of tribes' spiritual and communal connections for how people and the Earth interact.

Therefore, in the case of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) statement on environmental justice, Gilio-Whitaker notes

6. The EPA defines environmental justice as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. This goal will be achieved when everyone enjoys: the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards, and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work" ("Environmental Justice").

its shortcomings as a "universalizing, unidimensional approach that fails to account for different histories" (36). In sum, "for environmental justice to be responsive to the needs of Native peoples it must be indigenized—tailored to account for their very different histories, relationships to the land, and political relationships to the State" (147). On this latter point, Karen Jarratt-Snider and Marianne O. Nielsen's recent work on Indigenous environmental justice clarifies how popular articulations of environmental justice aiming for racial parity in the access to clean, healthy natural resources fail to account for the fact that "Native American tribes are governments, not ethnic minorities" (2020: 9). This important distinction necessitates a different relationship between tribal nations and the United States government, one based on the "Trust Doctrine," which emphasizes the federal government's "obligation to protect the interests of Indian tribes" (2016: 9). This article's primary objective is to foreground some of these different histories in light of tribal nations' unique legal position to raise awareness of their utility and relevance to present and future Colorado River governance.

Kyle Powys Whyte's work on environmental injustice informs Gilio-Whitaker's assessment and helps further elucidate the challenges Indigenous communities within the Colorado River Basin and elsewhere face when it comes to asserting their claims to their historic lands and waters. While Whyte's vision of an Indigenous environmental justice relies on principles of access previously articulated, his notion goes much deeper to the fundamental relationships humans have with other humans and the natural world that have been nurtured for countless generations. For Whyte, environmental

> injustice also occurs when the social institutions of one society systematically erase certain socioecological contexts, or horizons, that are vital for members of another society to experience themselves in the world as having responsibilities to other humans, nonhumans and the environment. Injustice, here, involves one society robbing another society of its capacities to experience the world as a place of collective life that its members feel responsible for maintaining into the future. (12.4)

The relationships Whyte traces between various human and nonhuman entities both in the present and for the future encapsulate

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his "systems of responsibilities," and it is the "interference with and erasure" of these connections that constitute environmental injustice (12.25). The subsequent analysis of the Ten Tribes' "Water Study" and "Voices" projects highlights some of these "horizons" and their associated discourses through which tribes reinscribe their role as river stewards.

Other scholars have also emphasized these particular relationships in light of Indigenous land possession. In summarizing Diné (Navajo) and Annishinaabe/Ojibwe perspectives on nature and their contrast to romanticized notions of the "ecological Indian," Fitzgerald explains that because "nature is linked to everything else," nature is understood "not on sentimental feelings or affinities for what, in American English, can be amorphous concepts," but on a system of "relationships and stewardship" (2015: 11).[7] Joni Adamson and Salma Monani extend this understanding of Indigenous connections with nature by framing these approaches within what they identify as "Indigenous cosmovisions," perspectives which "articulate dynamic epistemologies that have been negotiated over long histories (sometimes thousands of years), and many present sound ethical and scientific reasoning for ecological protection" (2017: 9).[8] Thus, rather than framing the natural world as the antithesis of culture, a trope that has bedeviled Western literature for generations, the Indigenous texts examined here forge connections between nature and culture where concern for the land and water reflects a concern for the self, the home,

7. For more on the notion of the ecological Indian see Shepard Krech's *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (2000).

8. Adamson and Monani ground their discussion of Indigenous cosmovisions within the theory of cosmopolitics, the origins of which they trace in the introduction to their edited collection *Ecocriticism and Indigenous Studies*. They conclude that cosmopolitics "implies that we are entering a moment in politics that takes as its goal [...] the recognition of intergenerational, evolutionary space and time required not just for the survival of all species, but for the recognition of the 'rights' to life for all humans and nonhumans" (7). Looking to Adamson's extensive work on this emerging perspective, Mascha Gemein defines ecopolitics both as a "theoretical framework and political strategy for an expansion of political participation beyond the human realm" and notes that it "corresponds to the philosophies guiding Indigenous movements" (2016: 485).

community, and all relationships that unite the human with the non-human world.[9]

These articulations of responsibility to the Earth and its inhabitants run counter to private property and the American West's prior appropriation doctrine. Although prior appropriation implies "beneficial" use—intended to prevent the "waste" of water flowing in a stream that could otherwise be used for a public good such as agricultural or domestic use—it is beholden to the prevailing beliefs about how water benefits society. While sensibilities have shifted in the United States to extend beneficial use to include ecosystem management and aesthetic purposes in certain areas, western water law is still a system rooted in ownership and individual rights that often pits users and uses against one another. In my readings of the texts that follow, I examine how the narratives broaden the possibilities of beneficial use through systems of responsibility, which Gilio-Whitaker suggests in her own summation of these connections are "relationships of reciprocity based on responsibility toward [...] life forms" (2019: 13). Such relationships then, as they extend beyond the human world and emphasize the value of all life forms, become provocative examples of "native resistance" (13). Expressed and forged through narrative to establish the authors' rhetorical sovereignty, these responsibilities, relationships, and cosmovisions define how these "first in time, first in right" Indigenous communities today seek to develop their Colorado River allocations and use their unique legal position and discursive strategies to emerge as water leaders in an age of growing uncertainty and scarcity.

TEN TRIBES PARTNERSHIP TRIBAL "WATER STUDY"

One of the most extensive and recent collections of Indigenous voices from the watershed comes from the Colorado River Basin Tribes Partnership or Ten Tribes Partnership (Partnership) formed in 1992 to "claim their seat at the table and raise their voices

9. Such are the issues at the heart of the recent Dakota Access Pipeline protests on the Standing Rock Reservation. In *Our History is the Future* (2019) Nick Estes cites the Lakota and Dakota idea of Mitakuye Oyasin or "all my relations" or "we are all related" in his treatment of Indigenous efforts to protect the Mni Sose (Missouri River) (15).

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in the management of the Colorado River as water challenges persist" ("The Ten Tribes Partnership").[10] This partnership includes the Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, the Southern Ute Tribe, the Jicarilla Apache Nation, and the Navajo Nation from the Upper Basin and the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe, the Chemehuevi Indian Tribe, the Colorado River Indian Tribes, the Quechan Indian Tribe, and the Cocopah Indian Tribe from the Lower Basin.[11] Together, they represent a powerful force for promoting Indigenous rights throughout the Colorado River Basin as they hold claims to 2.8 million acre-feet of Colorado River water ("Water Study" 1–1). The Partnership's study represents a significant step in the tribes' assertion of their rhetorical and hydrological sovereignty as it captures their cultural, spiritual, and economic values—their systems of relationships to the river.[12]

In December 2018, the Partnership joined the US Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Reclamation to publish the extensive "Water Study" to articulate each of the tribal nations' relationships to water and to outline past, current, and future water needs. Informed by the 2012 Colorado Basin Supply and Demand Study, which outlines the Basin's future water needs as a whole, the Partnership's "Water Study" ensures that many of the region's tribes articulate "from their own perspective" what they see as the Basin's water issues ("Water Study" i). The 362-page study begins with the Foreword authored by both the Commissioner of Reclamation, Brenda Burman, and the Ten Tribes

10. In his opening remarks at a 2018 water law symposium, Ernest House, Jr, a member of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and former Executive Director of the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs, shared wisdom his father had passed on to him after years of representing the tribe: "if you're not at the table, you're on the menu" ("Enhancing"). The Ten Tribes Partnership represents an important coalition to bring tribal perspectives on water issues to the fore.

11. The Upper Basin includes Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming and a very small portion of Northern Arizona. The Lower Basin comprises the rest of Arizona, California, and Nevada.

12. The Ten Tribes Partnership represents only a portion of the tribal interests in the watershed as there are twenty-nine reservations served by the Colorado River ("Water Study" i). See the "Colorado River Basin Tribes" section on the *Tribal Water Uses in the Colorado River Basin* website for more information about the Basin's different Indigenous nations and tribes.

Partnership to reflect the unique legal relationship that unites the US government with these tribal nations as sovereign entities. This opening and the rest of the extensive document reflect the Partnership's efforts to "control the story" of Colorado River use by the Basin's Indigenous communities, a move Timothy Casey identifies as an important strategy in shaping policy (2020: 161). The Partnership's Foreword underscores from the beginning that "water is life" and situates findings about tribal water interests within the watershed's broader context ("Water Study" iii). That is, the Partnership's goals are to better understand how their current, respective water use fits into the Basin's larger management picture, how tribal development of reserved water will impact entities using tribal water, and how future tribal water development will impact the Basin in coming years ("Water Study" iii). Such goals demonstrate just how significant a player tribal water rights have become within the watershed. Where they historically have had minimal impact on the Basin's overall management, today they have become the "slumbering Monstro of the Southwest"—a juggernaut which will have a significant impact on how Colorado River water is developed in the future (Powell 2008: 154). The Partnership's "Water Study" and the articulations of each respective tribe's water rights and unresolved claims cannot be denied. Future deliberations will be shaped by these rights established over a century ago with the Winters case.

At first glance, the comprehensive "Water Study" resembles a typical hydrological report filled with scientific data to guide management scenarios, yet its reliance upon narrative throughout the document brings a very different tone to the type of reports produced by the Bureau. Indeed, as tribes engage narrative to evoke their cultural and spiritual values, they exhibit "Indigenous scientific literacies," which Adamson and Monani reveal are "complex multispecies entanglements that imaginatively argue for a safer, livable present and future" (14).[13] For example, evidence for such literacies appears in the Partnership's water-is-life theme, which

13. Adamson and Monani look to Grace L. Dillon's collection *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction* (2012) to formulate their assessment of Indigenous scientific literacies within the broader theories of cosmopolitics and cosmovisions.

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is far more than an obvious statement about the element's fundamental nature to all life. Rather, it is a refrain expressing deep cultural and spiritual values that define the tribal nations' stewardship of this material entity. The Partnership's introductory vision statement captures this broader understanding of water's significance within an Indigenous context. The statement reads,

> Water is life. Water is the giver and sustainer of life. Water is a sacred and spiritual element to the Tribes of the Partnership. The Creator instilled in the First Peoples the responsibility of protecting the delicate, beautiful balance of Mother Earth for the benefit of all living creatures. The Partnership will embrace and own the stewardship of the Colorado River and lead from a spiritual mandate to ensure that this sacred water will always be protected, available and sufficient. ("Water Study" 1–1)

The repeated emphasis on the spiritual relationship to water and the Tribes' sacred duty to protect and maintain this essential resource draws a noteworthy difference from how traditional, non-native water reports articulate the importance of water. The Partnership establishes its rhetorical and hydrological sovereignty by clearly stating its role in the Colorado's future: they "own" the river's caretaking and will be the leaders on this front, one which other entities, including the federal government with its legal responsibility to the tribes, have failed to do. With this deliberate and direct language it is no surprise that the Ten Tribes Partnership's official website opens with a panoramic image of the Colorado River winding through desert canyons with the title "Keepers of the River" and a selection from the "Water Study"'s vision statement emphasizing the Partnership's role in stewarding the river ("Ten Tribes Partnership").[14] Significantly, this cultural relationship to the Colorado also infuses river management with spirituality. Nowhere does this passage set scientific knowledge as the de facto epistemology by which to direct the river's future. Instead, the "Water Study" is a bold witness of Indigenous cosmovisions by which the tribes will govern their

14. The "Keeper of the Rivers" title recalls the "Water Protectors" moniker used by those protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline (Estes 2019: 15).

allocations—approaches which stand in stark contrast to mainstream river governance systems.[15]

The "Water Study" emphasizes this unique relationship between the cultural and spiritual relationships that defines their stewardship, particularly in Chapter 5, which offers an extensive overview of each of the ten tribes and their historical connections to the Colorado and its tributaries. For example, the section on the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe outlines their historic territory that ranged from southern Colorado and into Utah and New Mexico depending on the time of year and their eventual relocation to the reservation in southwest Colorado where they turned to ranching and agriculture ("Water Study" 5.3–3). The Tribe also notes the inadequate water infrastructure and the non-irrigable lands that characterize much of the reservation (5.3–3–4). This brief history reminds the audience of the Ute's long-standing tenure in the area and the challenges they have faced since relocation as they have had to adapt to settler-colonial lifestyles. Despite the upheaval that has changed their traditional ways of life and connections to historic homelands and waters, the Ute Mountain Ute continue to maintain important cultural and spiritual relationships with the waters around them. The tribe explains that "Water brings life, sustenance, and is a tool of blessing and prayer for the Tribe," particularly during the Bear and Sun dances that renew tribal identity and meaning (5.3–4). By outlining these sacred connections to water, the Tribe establishes the rationale for subsequent discussions about its current water supply and the unresolved water claims it has with New Mexico and Utah.

The "Water Study"'s most extensive discussion of a system of reciprocal responsibilities regarding the Basin's waters and inhabitants along cultural and spiritual values derives from the segment by New Mexico's Jicarilla Apache Nation. Following brief information about the Nation's reservation, the document provides a lengthy overview of their historic connections to water. The Nation explains that "Water, in all its forms […] is sacred to the Jicarilla people

15. Jarrat-Snider and Nielsen explain that while typical definitions of environmental justice speak to where people "live, work, go to school, and play" an indigenized environmental justice attends also to the places in which people "pray" (2020: 10).

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and has been a fundamental tenet of the Nation's religion since time immemorial. In Jicarilla creation stories, "Born of Water" is a major deity who made the world a safe place for human habitation and brought the four sacred rivers—the Arkansas, Rio Grande, Canadian, and Pecos Rivers—to the Jicarilla people" (5.4–3). This explanation of water's significance to the Nation's cultural identity establishes the permanence of this spiritual relationship between the people and the water, one that is "to be protected and honored through religious ceremonies and rituals" (5.4–3). Thus, water has been and continues to be a key component of the Jicarilla Apache's cosmology and identity as the sacred rivers delineate their homelands, which too are "sacred," and which define "Jicarilla religion, culture, lifestyles, and their very identities as a distinct people" (5.4–3–5.4–4). As such, water "has never been just a commodity or a necessity of life" for the Nation, "but a sacred element that requires respect, reverential treatment, and efficient use" (5.4–4).

Evident throughout the Nation's statements is the role water has played in the past and continues to perform today. This connectivity underscores the Nation's rights to water established long before Anglo settlement of their homelands and the need today for the Nation to develop economically while maintaining this sacred relationship. The Nation concludes this section of its respective water study reminding readers that "The reverence for and appreciation of the scarcity of water continue to dictate the Jicarilla's individual and cultural relationship to their homeland. The features of the landscape, especially its water resources, are instrumental and integral to the Nation's modern economic development and the preservation of this ancient culture in the 21st century" (5.4–4). These declarations about their sacred connections to the rivers and their homelands, and how these connections are vital to the tribe's future prosperity economically and culturally, assert their fundamental rights to this entity based on the "first in time" principle. Such statements powerfully challenge notions of the "Vanished Indian" myth that too often inform modern America's understanding of Indigenous cultures.

As an important tool in asserting their rhetorical and hydrological sovereignty, each tribal nation's statement on the cultural, spiritual, and economic uses of water upends historically inaccurate

ideas about the region's Indigenous presence. These statements, expressed often in narrative form that delineates tribal histories and, at times, creation stories as in the case of the Jicarilla Apache, combine with extensive commentary on storage capacity, flow rates, irrigation and groundwater infrastructure, and projections of water-use scenarios outlined for each of the Partnership's tribes. The "Water Study"'s discursive hybridity demonstrates the Partnership's rhetorical skill in engaging with the dominant scientific and instrumental discourses that shape water management while at the same time incorporating statements reflective of their ethical and moral standing on water's being and connection to the Partnership's various identities. This discursive manipulation as a form of rhetorical sovereignty or Gilio-Whitaker's "native resistance" can also be expressed as "engaged resistance," Dean Rader's terms, which Adamson and Monani summarize as "a fundamentally Indigenous form of aesthetic discourse that engages both Native and Western means as resistance against," in Rader's words, "colonial assimilation and erasure" (qtd. in Adamson and Monani 2017: 15). These strategic moves throughout the "Water Study" reflect the Partnership's keen awareness of the high stakes involved in securing their legally allotted water and stewarding its care by underscoring the river's sacred nature for all river users now and in the future.

"THE VOICES OF GRAND CANYON" DIGITAL PROJECT

Just as federal agencies such as the Bureau of Reclamation have begun to listen to and engage tribal nations more closely on water resource issues, so too have environmental organizations recognized, albeit long overdue, the value of Indigenous leadership and participation in shaping the public's understanding of the river and watershed. The Grand Canyon Trust's "The Voices of Grand Canyon" campaign is one such initiative to foreground Indigenous systems of responsibilities in this particular region. This non-profit, which focuses on environmental and cultural issues throughout the Colorado Plateau bioregion, released this collection of responses on its website in February 2020. The voices include Jim Enote (Zuni), Nikki Cooley (Diné), Leigh Kuwanwisiwma (Hopi), Coleen Kaska (Havasupai), and Loretta Jackson-Kelly (Hualapai)

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who recount their individual and tribal connections to the Grand Canyon and the Colorado River. Their extenstion of the oral tradition through digital media comprising brief videos and print statements combine to reinforce the tribes' historic connections which assert their "first in time" claims to the river and its surrounding lands.[16]

Similar to the expressions of cultural and spiritual relationships within the "Water Study," Jim Enote, the Chief Executive Officer of the Colorado Plateau Foundation, speaks of his tribe's origins in the Grand Canyon and the petroglyphs on Zuni lands to the east and within the Grand Canyon to reaffirm the people's deep connection to these sacred places within the larger Colorado Basin as "they are telling us we should never forget where we came from" ("Voices").[17] Noting the Hopi's particular emergence within the Grand Canyon, Enote provides a history of the Zuni's origins at Chimik'yana'kya dey'a or Ribbon Falls, stating that they lived in the canyon for "a long, long time" and then "emerged, exploring all the tributaries of the Colorado River" before uniting on the lands that presently constitute Zuni Pueblo ("Voices"). While petroglyphs carved into rock long ago capture this movement from the canyon and beyond, the performance of Zuni rituals continues to reinforce their ancestral home ("Voices"). The perpetuation of this knowledge helps Zuni and outsiders understand the tribe's deep ties to this sacred space.

The Grand Canyon's significance as a place of emergence also defines Leigh Kuwanwisiwma's perspectives on the Hopi's affiliation to the area. but for the Hopi, the Grand Canyon is not just the tribe's "genesis" but their "final spiritual home" as their spirits will return to the confluence of the Colorado and Little Colorado

16. This adoption of new technologies to address current crises recalls Tayo's healing in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977) wherein Ku'oosh, the traditional Laguna healer, explains, "There are some things we can't cure like we used to" (35). When not healed by the traditional methods, Tayo resorts to visiting Old Betonie, an unorthodox medicine man who helps Tayo understand that "after the white people came, elements in the world began to shift; and it became necessary to create new ceremonies" (116). I thank Manlio Della Marca for pointing out this connection to Silko's work.
17. The Colorado Plateau Foundation works with Indigenous communities in protecting local ecosystems, working toward food security, and preserving Indigenous languages.

rivers to then take on the form of clouds, which will then circle the earth ("Voices"). Contrasting popular beliefs about the Grand Canyon's supernal wilderness qualities, which tend to neglect the canyon's human presence, Kuwanwisiwma asks that visitors to the area understand that "the Grand Canyon and humanity are all one" ("Voices"). Coleen Kaska similarly invites the canyon's visitors to consider the region's Indigenous history as she contemplates the Havasupai's loss of tribal lands and how Grand Canyon National Park's centennial celebration in 2019 represents for her a century of dispossession and the failure of the government to fulfill its obligations to Havasupai by recognizing their claims to their traditional lands, including their emergence place at Red Butte ("Voices"). Growing up hearing the stories of her people's ancestral connections to the Grand Canyon, Kaska directly addresses the audience, reminding listeners that "Natives are still around. […] And they will never forget. I will never forget" ("Voices"). For Kaska, like Kuwanwisiwma, the canyon is a powerful reminder of her people's past and the injustices that have characterized the tribe's relationship to the canyon, particularly after the establishment of the Havasupai reservation, which greatly reduced their use of and access to their traditional homelands.

As one listens and reads these diverse tribal cosmovisions, it is clear that the narratives used herein operate beyond a simple informative overview of each tribe's historic connections to the Colorado River and the Grand Canyon. Instead, these discussions about sacred origins function to highlight the need to bring attention to current issues of sovereignty and survival the tribes face in light of ongoing threats to their lands and tribal identities. Loretta Jackson-Kelly describes the significance of the middle of the Colorado River as "the backbone of the [Hualapai] people" and that "Without that backbone, we cannot survive" ("Voices"). Her work in the tribe's cultural resources department and tourism agency ensures that she is able to teach this essential relationship between her people and the river, whose native fish are her people's ancestors, to the Hualapai reservation's many visitors ("Voices"). She notes that many outsiders come to the reservation with incorrect ideas about Indigenous peoples and that she wishes they would "try to understand the world that they're going

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to step into" ("Voices") so as to recognize the ongoing presence and vitality of the Hualapai and other native peoples.

This ongoing effort to dispel negative stereotypes and instruct non-Indigenous peoples about Indigenous survivial throught the perpetuation of their cultural and spiritual relationships to the Colorado and Grand Canyon highlights Nikki Cooley's contribution to the "Voices of Grand Canyon" project. Like Jackson-Kelly, Cooley seeks to dismantle myths about the West and Indigenous peoples perpetuated by popular culture. Her unique position as the first Diné woman licensed as a Colorado River guide enables her to challenge her customers' oft-held beliefs that "Native American culture [...] was lore. It was John Wayne movies" ("Voices"). Such on-the-river experiences with misinformed tourists reiterate the importance of acknowledging the very real violence her people faced, how the Grand Canyon was a refuge for them during the time of relocation, and how it continues to shape the practices and beliefs of a people who are very much involved in shaping the Southwest's present and future. "It's a place of resilience in more than one sense and can teach us about the history of a people who were trying to survive—the people who lived, persevered, and are still here today," she explains ("Voices").

Informing her fellow rafters of this intimate connection, Cooley also invites them to see the river and canyon beyond the sublime recreational appeal for which they are so highly regarded by visitors across the globe. The canyon "is not a museum to be gawked at," as she explains, but a place of inestimable sacred value she equates to her "church" ("Voices"). She emphasizes this point through her elaboration on the Diné's view of the Colorado's confluences with its tributaries. Cooley explains that "The big Colorado River is considered the male river, the Little Colorado and the San Juan, they are all considered the female rivers. And where the waters come together, the confluence, together they nourish the rest of the Grand Canyon. It is a very sacred place that we must treat very carefully, respectfully, and not think of it as a theme park" ("Voices" 2020). This last reference to how some view the canyon likely refers to recent development plans for the Colorado and Little Colorado Rivers evident in the defeated Escalade Project and the proposed

hydroelectric dam on the Little Colorado.[18] As the confluence and cultural sites throughout the Colorado and Little Colorado corridors are sacred to the Diné, Hopi, and other tribes, the realization of these projects would be a direct affront to tribal identity and sovereignty. Cooley and her fellow "The Voices of Grand Canyon" contributors unequivocally reject mainstream beliefs that separate nature from culture and forward myopic and, in many cases, superficial perspectives about the river's and the canyon's worth. As these five tribal voices attest, the Colorado and its celebrated canyon demand greater reverence and respect as do the various tribes whose past, present, and future are so intricately aligned with these entities.

CONCLUSION

The sampling of voices addressed in this article demonstrate how various tribal nations within the Colorado River Basin have asserted and continue to exert their rhetorical sovereignty to develop comprehensive Indigenous cosmovisions and systems of responsibilities to all the Basin's entities. These systems reflect the sacred nature of the Colorado, its tributaries, and the lands through which they flow. They honor the many diverse peoples—native and non-native alike—who depend on the rivers for survival, and the flora and fauna which animate the Basin's life-world and are fellow citizens to the millions of people vying for diminishing resources. Such expressions highlight the efforts to address environmental injustices that have historically separated tribes from their legally allotted water shares. These examples, coupled with events such as the Dakota Access Pipeline protests in the Missouri River Basin and Utah's recent quantification settlement with the Navajo Nation, reflect the growing strength of a collective Indigenous

18. The Escalade Project envisioned a large resort at the confluence of the Colorado and Little Colorado River with accompanying lodging, dining, and shopping options, as well as a tram that would carry up to 10,000 people/day from the rim to the confluence ("Stopping Grand Canyon Escalade"). Pumped Hydro Storage LLC has plans for four dams along the Little Colorado, whose reservoirs would inundate numerous sacred sites throughout the canyon (Nelson 2020).

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movement to take the lead in caring for the nation's water bodies imperiled by settler-colonialism.[19]

However, much work to remedy these injustices remains. While the "Water Study" and the "The Voices of Grand Canyon" project are important efforts to move Indigenous voices into the mainstream, they still reside, all too often, on the periphery. The Navajo Nation's COVID-19 crisis has reinforced this unfortunate fact. In a letter to the *Navajo Times* the authors, hailing from Gallup, New Mexico and Window Rock, Arizona, respectively, rail against the economic conditions on the Navajo reservation and the continued lack of water infrastructure. They note that as families live together in communities where domestic water exists or travel to nearby towns to purchase water, they put themselves at risk of contracting the coronavirus. For them, "The COVID-19 crisis in Navajoland today is partly also a water crisis" (Kelley and Francis 2020). Similarly, Jack Ahasteen's political cartoons of 21 and 28 May 2020 for the *Navajo Times* corroborate these sentiments as they depict the economic inequality that exists on the reservation as a result of water insecurity. One cartoon depicts two men driving a truck hauling water, looking beyond the reservation's border to a desert oasis where palm trees, a lake covered with watercraft, and high rises glisten in the summer sun. The men driving the truck, their faces covered by masks, look out toward the city and exclaim, "As long as we have water we have some hope!" while the bottom of the cartoon reads "Control the water and you have everything" ("Control the Water"). The second image, "$600 Million Care Act Water Line," wryly comments on the recent legislation and the reservation's water woes as it depicts a human chain where buckets of water are being passed between individuals masked to prevent the coronavirus's spread. The quips at the bottom of the drawing read: "hire local, buy local" and "unemployment rate 0" ("$600 Million").

19. In April 2019, Senator Mitt Romney introduced Senate Bill 1027, Navajo Utah Water Rights Settlement Act of 2019, to quantify the Nation's water rights claims and provide funding to bring water infrastructure to many of the reservation's homes in Utah that lack running water. The bill passed the Senate in June 2020 and, as of April 2021, awaits House approval (see "US Senate Passes Navajo Utah Water Rights Settlement Act").

These recent examples highlighting the economic inequities on the reservation reflect the ongoing and very real challenges Indigenous communities throughout the Colorado Basin face as they seek water security. However, the Tribal "Water Study" and "The Voices of Grand Canyon" projects represent significant steps in asserting the tribes "first in time, first in right" position as they underscore their long-standing presence in the region and the various relationships they have cultivated with the river over millennia. Bolstered by substantial water rights and the power associated with those rights, the tribes will increasingly become more prominent participants at the bargaining table. Yet unlike many of those who have historically managed the river for purely political or economic aims, the tribes have other values guiding their efforts to use water. From the partnerships established in these projects between the tribes, the Bureau, and the Grand Canyon Trust, there is hope that the values outlined herein by the Keepers of the River can reach a broader audience so that new stories may be told which invite a greater reverence and respect for the Colorado and all its relations.

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CENTRAL AMERICAN RIVERS AS SITES OF COLONIAL CONTESTATION

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INTRODUCTION

In the introduction to *Troubled Waters: Rivers in Latin American Imagination*, Elizabeth Pettinaroli and Ana María Mutis provide a historical overview of the many ways in which rivers in Latin American literature constitute "a distinctive space for the symbolic negotiation of the critical consciousness that shapes collective memories and subjectivities" as well as a "locus for the literary exploration of questions of power, identity, resistance, and discontent" (Pettinaroli and Mutis 2013: 5). Scholars of Latin American Literature have observed a variety of ways in which rivers have helped shape the Latin American literary imaginary. To name just a few, they have allowed scholars to place the writings of Alexander von Humboldt in dialogue with contemporary environmental thought (Marcone 2013: 89), have been the focus of early 20th century literary projects related to nationalism (Anderson 2013: 122), have been employed as vehicles "to convey disenchantment with the ideas of progress and globalization" (Pettinaroli and Mutis 2013: 11) as well as "countercurrent discourses" that offer a reevaluation of colonial and neocolonial endeavors (Kressner 2013: 191). As highlighted throughout *Troubled Waters*, rivers have been the object of the colonial gaze in Latin American literature from Christopher Columbus's letters to the Spanish monarchs to contemporary representations of hydroelectric dams (Pettinaroli and Mutis 2013: 1, 13).

With regard to Central American cultural production, for both historical and artistic reasons, the imagery of rivers frequently

plays an important role in works from and about the region's civil wars of the 1960s-1990s. In an effort to highlight a few important examples of the presence of rivers in Central American literature and film of the civil war period, in the present essay I analyze Salvadoran director Luis Mandoki's 2004 film *Voces inocentes* (*Innocent Voices*), fellow Salvadoran Mario Bencastro's 1997 novella "Había una vez un río" ("Once Upon a River"), and Nicaraguan-Salvadoran Claribel Alegría's 1983 testimonial poem "La mujer del Río Sumpul" ("The Woman of the Sumpul River"). These works, I argue, are examples of the ways in which Central American rivers often were portrayed as "deathscapes" that are historically marked by state-sponsored violence against Salvadoran citizens (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010: 4). As sites of massacres of unarmed civilians and armed conflicts between the Salvadoran military and the revolutionary Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), the rivers in these works become ground zero in the Salvadoran government's oppression of social movements aimed at reforming the nation's neocolonial political and economic structures. Having established the centrality of rivers as deathscapes in *Innocent Voices*, "Once Upon a River," and "The Woman of the Sumpul River," I will then turn my attention to Guatemalan author Arturo Arias's 2015 novel *El precio del consuelo* (translated here as *The Price of Comfort*), which also features a river as the site of state-sponsored violence against rural citizens during the civil war period. In contrast with the Salvadoran works, however, Arias's novel also highlights issues of environmental justice related to the use of rivers in Central America that continue to plague the region to date. In the present essay, I thus argue that these works are compelling representations of the ways in which rivers have become sites of contestation between neocolonial and decolonial forces in Central America.

THE IMAGE OF THE RIVER IN *INNOCENT VOICES*

In Luis Mandoki's 2004 film *Innocent Voices*, the loss of innocence is a central theme. Based on co-writer Óscar Torres's childhood in Cuscatancingo, El Salvador, the film is set in the final years of the Salvadoran civil war and focuses on the forced recruitment of twelve-year old boys into the Salvadoran military to combat the revolutionary guerillas of the FMLN. Released twelve years

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after the end of the conflict, Mandoki's film serves as an *ex post facto* denunciation of the Salvadoran army's policy during the war as well as a form of resistance to military recruitment of children around the globe. At several key moments of the plot in *Innocent Voices*, the image of the San Antonio river figures prominently.[1] The film begins in slow motion as the protagonist Chava and his friends are led down a muddy road, through the rain, at gunpoint by Salvadoran soldiers. Although the viewer does not learn so for certain until the end of the film, they are being led to the river to be executed. The story is an analepsis told from Chava's perspective that returns to this moment at the end of the film.

The river is initially portrayed as a place of recreation associated with the innocence of youth. Early in the film, Chava and his schoolmates playfully wrestle at the river's edge, an image that aligns with conventional symbolic uses of rivers in Latin America. As Mark D. Anderson observes, "drinking and immersion in a river's waters have a long genealogy as symbols of communion and baptism […]. In overwhelmingly Catholic, postcolonial Latin America, national waters took on pseudo-religious connotations of purity, communal integration, rebirth, and emergence" (2013: 118). The image of joyful innocence is disrupted, however, when the boys spot soldiers from the Salvadoran army marching into their village with machine guns slung over their shoulders. This scene is important because it begins the pattern of events throughout the story in which the children's youthful naiveté is stripped away by the war that is ravaging their community. Indeed, this becomes the film's central theme when the military marches into the local schoolyard, removes the twelve-year old boys from their classes, and sends them off in a truck to join the Salvadoran army.

The loss of innocence motif is continued when the film returns to the river where the four boys who play there at the beginning of the film are now in their underwear throwing rocks into the river after going for a swim. In this scene, however, it is their friend and former classmate Antonio who appears in military camouflage with his automatic rifle in hand and interrupts their games by firing a shot into the air. Their invitation for Antonio to join

1. In my email interview of Torres he confirmed that it is the San Antonio River depicted in the film.

them in throwing stones into the river presents a stark contrast with the stories he tells them about being trained by gringos and ambushing guerrillas.

The process of Chava's traumatic loss of childhood to the war is complete by the end of the story. When the young protagonist and his friends manage to evade recruitment, they leave the protection of their families, and escape into the night to join the guerrilla forces. In doing so, they unintentionally lead a group of soldiers to the guerrilla camp in the jungle. Chava and his friends are captured, and the film returns to the opening shot of the boys walking at gunpoint through the rain. It is not until this point, however, that the viewer learns for certain that in the initial shot the boys are being led to the river to be executed.

Chava and his friends kneel down at the river's edge. Two are shot in the back of the head. Just before Chava is about to be killed, a group of guerrillas emerges from the trees and engages the soldiers in a firefight. Chava escapes and runs home to find his village incinerated. Bloody cadavers are strewn across the river and, above, Chava's cognitively impaired friend Ancha hangs from a noose with a bullet hole in his forehead. Once again, the conventional use of rivers as symbols of life, innocence, and purity has been turned on its head. What was once Chava's playground has been converted into a burial ground.

By memorializing the river through film as a site where innocent lives were taken, it becomes what Avril Maddrell and James D. Sidaway describe as a deathscape, "a place associated with death, but also as a memorial site with deep symbolic meaning" (2010: 4).[2] As Maddrell and Sidaway argue:

> death and dying are intensely anchored in space and place. Death and dying draw attention to the meanings that we invest in space and place, in as much as spaces and places associated with death and dying to evoke the deepest memories and to stir an intensity of emotions is evidence of the power of place, and is a reminder that the very nature of our meaningful experience with place is fundamentally anchored in emotions, not functions. At the same time, the process

2. Tricia Cusack discusses the related concept of "riverscapes" in *Riverscapes and National Identities* (2019).

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and experience of death and dying is intensely place-based, deeply associated as they are with particular sites and locations. (xv)

For co-writer Oscar Torres, constructing memory is a crucial function of film—"to remind ourselves that tragedy exists in this world, and that if we are not conscious enough, not educated enough, not present enough, if we forget that the chance that it will happen again is too present, it is a dangerous thing to forget" (Torres 2015: 10:06). Despite having received death threats for the film's historical content, he also recalls that when he returned to El Salvador upon the film's launch, "A woman there said to me, 'I thank you so much for this film because we have these memories, but we are told every day that it didn't happen'" (Mann 2005: 5:58). Both the threat of murder for revealing the oppressive nature of the Salvadoran military during the war and the continual attempt to suppress historical truths about the war are examples that support Edurne Portela's contention that the act of remembering in Latin American cultural production is often "set against oblivion and for justice […] as a strategy to avoid the repetition, to denounce the violation of human rights, and to pay tribute to the victims" (161). This is precisely the function of *Innocent Voices*, which, through Chava's story, condemns the military's recruitment of children, refuses to allow this episode of history to be forgotten, and makes a powerful plea for the end of such practices around the world. The contrasting imagery of the river plays a critical role in the film's reconstruction of memory.

MARIO BENCASTRO'S "ONCE UPON A RIVER"

The contrasting imagery of the river in *Innocent Voices* as a symbol of both the innocence associated with childhood and the suffering of a country ravaged by political murder and guerrilla warfare is also present in Salvadoran author Mario Bencastro's novella "Once Upon a River," which interweaves imagery of rivers with testimonial accounts. In Bencastro's own words, his story combines "fiction, historical reality, superstition, and testimony" (*The Tree of Life* 110). Like *Innocent Voices*, it is a bildungsroman about an adolescent boy who is thrust into adulthood by the violence of civil war. The story begins with a brief introductory section

in which the river is established as a source of life for the valley around it. The plot develops with many of the conventions of a typical coming-of-age story by portraying the protagonist Tomás's relationships with his high school classmates and his growing affection for his girlfriend Esperanza. but the historical context forbids the possibility of the story focusing solely on these aspects of his development. His father is murdered by the Salvadoran army while working at the local cooperative farm, his sister leaves home to join the guerrilla movement, his Spanish teacher is assassinated in the schoolyard, and he and Esperanza narrowly escape death at the hands of the general who terrorizes their village on a daily basis.

The story's climax arrives when Tomás returns home from school one day to find the entire village fleeing towards the river. The narrator describes the scene:

> Helicopters flew over the trees, vomiting bombs and bullets. Homes were devoured by flames. The stampede finally reached the banks and the people threw themselves into the water. but the bullets were accurate. The river was incapable of protecting them. Tomás and Esperanza were left locked in an embrace, near a large rock, sprayed with bullets. (101)[3]

In contrast to the coming-of-age narrative in *Innocent Voices*, where defining events in the protagonists' development occur by a river, in Bencastro's novella, Tomás is murdered in the river and robbed of the opportunity to complete his transition into adulthood. The symbolic meaning of the river has now shifted from life to death.

The fragments of text that follow the narration of Tomas's death are structured as testimonials and are based on the accounts of survivors compiled by journalists in the brochure "Sumpul" and by investigators from the United Nations Truth Commission for El Salvador. According to Bencastro, "Once Upon a River" is based on the Sumpul River massacre of 14 May 1980, the El Mozote massacre of 11 December 1981, and the El Calabozo massacre on the bank of Amatitán River on 22 August 1982 (*The Tree of Life* 106). In this section of the story, five subjects give their accounts of the massacre, which inevitably include descriptions of the river:

3. The English quotations are from Susan Giersbach Rascón's 1997 translation.

That river, believe me, was white with dead bodies. (101)

The river was full of cadavers which the current then began to carry downstream. (104)

[T]here were tombs of dead children all along the river. (103)

I saw that they drowned the children they didn't shoot. Others they threw into the air and shot them as they fell. Many adults who didn't know how to swim drowned because the river was deep that day. (103)

The testimonies in this section create a vivid sense of the physical violence that occurred during the above-mentioned massacres. By setting the slaughter at the river, Bencastro reflects the reality of the events at El Calabozo and El Río Sumpul, where, in both cases, hundreds of *campesinos* were murdered in and on the banks of rivers as they attempted to flee the persecution of the Salvadoran army.

In addition to the historical reasons for the river imagery in "Once Upon a River," in the final two fragments of the story, which follow the testimonial section, Bencastro avails himself of the rich literary potential of the river by returning to it many years after the massacre. A man on horseback who has become lost in the valley comes across the river after three days of hunger and thirst, but is surprised by what he finds: "Voices emanated from the water, singing the tragedy of hundreds of unfortunate souls who once inhabited that region, and one ill-fated day, fleeing from persecution, threw themselves into the river where they died riddled with bullets" (105). Shocked and saddened by the river's story, the rider refuses to drink its water, preferring to die of thirst instead. Similar to *Innocent Voices*, the river has become a deathscape in the sense of a place associated with death and mourning and with deep symbolic meaning. Moreover, the image of the river as a speaking wound in this passage is an excellent example of Cathy Caruth's articulation of trauma narrative as the voice of the wound. That is, trauma not only as "the story of the individual in relation to the events of his own past, but as the story of the way in which one's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another, the way in which trauma may lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another's wound" (1996: 8).

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In "Once Upon a River" the testimonies of multiple subjects and the image of various voices emanating from the river create the effect of a collective wound among the Salvadoran people. The rider's decision not to drink the water can be understood as an act of solidarity that acknowledges that his life cannot be separated from the suffering of his fellow citizens.

Despite the river's association with death throughout the majority of the story and the horrific imagery of the testimonial section of the text, Bencastro concludes with a segment that restores the symbolism of the river to a source of life and nourishment: "The same waters that once were filled with blood and death became messengers of life and continued nourishing the valley with love and fantasy. Along its way flowers and trees again sprang forth, crops and animals flourished, families and towns expanded" (105). In doing so, he opens the possibility of renewed hope and refuses to allow El Salvador's rivers to be permanently converted into symbols of bloodshed. His conclusion suggests that if the river is a wound, then the wounds of trauma do not disappear, but can heal, and with healing comes the possibility of renewed life and hope. The shifting symbolism of the river in Bencastro's story is an excellent example of what Pettinaroli and Mutis characterize as the contradictory meanings of rivers in Latin American literature. That is, "as boundary and as connection; as paths to death and life; as emblems of both transformation and an anchoring of identity; as signs of dissolution and transformation; and as change and continuity (2013: 2).

CLARIBEL ALEGRÍA'S "THE WOMAN OF THE SUMPUL RIVER"

Similar to "Once Upon a River," Claribel Alegría's poem, "The Woman of the Sumpul River," was written as a denunciation of the Sumpul River massacre of 1980 that, as Mary K. DeShazer describes it, "saw more than six hundred campesinos fleeing El Salvador for their lives forced into the river to drown or be gunned down or hacked to death by Salvadoran or Honduran soldiers attacking them from each side of the border" (1994: 125). As a testimonial poem, "The Woman of the Sumpul River" inevitably portrays the river as the place where the killing occurred, but Alegría also takes advantage of the river's rich potential for symbolism

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in order to solicit the solidarity of the reader and more effectively capture the horror of the event. For Beverley and Zimmerman, "The Woman of the Sumpul River" is Alegría's "most powerful and influential effort" in creating "a poetized testimonio" in which the transcribed oral accounts of witness-participants in the war, in many cases, peasant women, are edited and rearranged in verse form" (1990: 138). The poem alternates between the first-person testimony of a mother who describes what she has experienced during the attack and the third-person narration of a separate poetic voice.

The opening verses of "The Woman of the Sumpul River" offer an invitation to the reader to accompany the poetic voice to the crater of a volcano where the history of El Salvador is churning. Here we find seminal figures from the pre-Columbian, colonial, independent, and modern eras, including Atlacatl, Pedro de Alvarado, Francisco Morazán, and Farabundo Martí. The opening image of the boiling caldera alludes to the country's social unrest and emphasizes the current moment of the civil war as yet another pivotal moment in Salvadoran history. The third-person poetic voice subsequently guides the reader down from the volcano into the countryside with all of its glimmering hues of green. As DeShazer astutely observes, the shades of green embodied in the fig trees, the ceiba trees, and the coffee groves in this section of the poem, symbolic of innocence and renewal, present a "harsh disjuncture characteristic of life in war-torn El Salvador" when contrasted with the buzzards and images of violence that pervade the text (1994: 125). Indeed, the image of "the buzzards / awaiting their feast" immediately precedes the first mention of the river in the poem, foreshadowing the association between the river and death that is subsequently established through the mother's testimony (20–21).[4]

After three of her children are murdered and her husband is captured, the mother falls wounded between two rocks at the river's edge. She plays dead and distracts her surviving child so as not to call the attention of the soldiers that sweep the area. The images of her innocent child as well as the five-year old who

4. The English quotations are from D.J. Flakoll's 1989 translation.

asks her if he can get out of the water provide a stark contrast with the ruthless soldiers who mercilessly and indiscriminately murder men, women, and children as they attempt to escape across the river. As she lies with her child waiting for the danger to pass, the mother's body becomes inseparable from the earth: "her body mingling with the earth / and the leaves / is the earth / is the water / is the planet / mother earth" (70–76). Her wound thus becomes a wound in the earth: "wounded mother earth / look at that deep fissure / that gapes open / the wound is bleeding" (79–82). The images of the wounded Earth and the deep, bleeding, fissure evoke the image of the blood-stained river as wound, suggesting the possibility of the massacre as a collective trauma to the Salvadoran people and an aberration of nature.

The following verses, however, allow a second interpretation of the wounded Earth and the deep fissure by shifting the text's focus to the volcano as metaphor for a people in revolt: "the volcano spews lava / a raging lava / mingled with blood / our history / has turned into lava / into an incandescent people / mingling with the earth / into invisible *guerrilleros*" (83–90). These verses suggest that the Salvadoran people have erupted in resistance to the violence of a tyrannical regime in the form of the guerrilla movement. The image of the volcano as metaphor for social revolt calls to mind Max Horkheimer's notion of the "revolt of nature" in his seminal treatise *Eclipse of Reason*. For Horkheimer, reason in industrialized society is an instrument of domination that constantly forces individuals to repress their natural desires by conforming for the sake of self-preservation (Horkheimer 1992: 97, 105, 110). However, he argues, "resistance and revulsion arising from this repression of nature have beset civilization from its beginnings, in the form of social rebellions […] as well as in the form of individual crime and mental derangement" (94). Nature, according to this perspective, is not an "other" that exists in opposition to humans, but rather a force that resides within us. Alegría's poem thus implies that the revolt of the people is not only justified, but, moreover, that it is a natural reaction that is indicative of their desire for freedom and justice.

In the poem's conclusion, after a lengthy list of the types of citizens (priests, beggars, guerillas etc.) that form the metaphorical

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lava of the people who burn for justice in the face of oppression, the mother appears before a reporter to tell her story. With one child in her arms and another walking at her side, this image fortifies the tone of hope and defiance that Alegría establishes throughout the poem. By concluding with a return to the beginning of the mother's testimony, "The Woman of the Sumpul River" reaffirms the importance of speaking of one's wounds both for the sake of historical truth and to resist the annihilation of one's identity (Laub 1995: 67, 70).

The image of the children as symbols of hope is consistent with the utopian vision of Alegría's poem as whole. With respect to the genre of Central American literature of testimony and resistance, Linda Craft has convincingly argued that "Ethics, urgency, and a utopian vision drive the witness/writer's production" (1997: 5). In this sense, "The Woman of the Sumpul River" parallels the other works analyzed in this essay. In *Innocent Voices* it is the construction of a world in which innocent children are no longer dragged into military conflicts and in "Once Upon a River" it is the belief in the possibility that El Salvador can heal from the wounds of civil war and that its people might one day lead a better, more peaceful life. This is achieved aesthetically in Bencastro's story by restoring the symbolism of the river to a source of life and nourishment, despite its tragic history.

In *Innocent Voices*, "Once Upon a River," and "The Woman of the Sumpul River," the traumatic events in the protagonists' lives that occur in and near rivers create an inversion of the conventional use of rivers as symbols of life, purity, innocence, and re-creation by associating them with violence, death, and destruction, revealing them as what Pettinaroli and Mutis refer to as "rivers of discontent" (2013: 14). At the same time, the river becomes a metaphor for the wounds of trauma, which allude to the psychological suffering not only of the protagonists, but to the collective pain of their countries torn asunder by war. Dennis Patrick Slattery has eloquently argued that wounds "always tell a story through their opening onto the world" (14). Without dishonoring the literal wounds that tens of thousands of victims suffered at the hands of their governments during the civil war in El Salvador, the works studied here make effective use of rivers as story-telling devices

by establishing them as sites of historical atrocity and by aesthetically linking them with the wounds of the Salvadoran people to elicit the horror of this dark period in Central American history. Each of these works serves a testimonial function both in Laub's sense of a historical recovery that resists the annihilation of the victims' identities (1995: 67, 70) and in Linda Craft's sense as a protest that gives voice to the voiceless (1997: 15). For Laub, testimony as related to trauma is "a dialogical process of exploration and reconciliation of two worlds—the one that was brutally destroyed and the one that is—that are different and will always remain so" (1995: 74). In *Innocent Voices*, "Once Upon a River," and "The Woman of the Sumpul River" the image of the river as deathscape underscores the distance between these two worlds and allows each artist to make compelling contributions to the telling of Central American history. The traumatic events in the protagonists' lives that occur in and near rivers create an inversion of conventional use of rivers as symbols of life, purity, innocence, and re-creation by associating them with violence, death, and destruction.

GENOCIDE AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN ARTURO ARIAS'S *THE PRICE OF COMFORT*

Guatemalan author Arturo Arias's 2015 novel *The Price of Comfort* also sheds light on river-related violence from Central America's civil war period. Similar to El Salvador, during Guatemala's thirty-six-year war (1960–1996), the Guatemalan army engaged in a campaign of repression against labor unions, students, peasants, and indigenous citizens in an effort to dismantle leftist guerilla groups, which eventually united as the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG) (Booth, et al. 2006: 121–123). The seeds of Guatemala's conflict were sown when democratically elected president Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán abruptly resigned in 1954 as the result of a military coup facilitated by the CIA in what was code-named "Operation PBSuccess." The Eisenhower administration had direct links to Guatemala's largest landowner the United Fruit Company, including Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who represented United Fruit while he was a law partner at his New York law

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firm Sullivan & Cromwell, and CIA Director Allen Dulles, who was a member of United Fruit's board of directors (Cohen 2012: 186). With the coup, the Eisenhower administration brought an end to Guatemala's decade of democracy and thwarted Arbenz's attempt at decolonial agrarian reforms intended to create a more just distribution of Guatemala's arable land.

The Price of Comfort reconstructs the history of several massacres that occurred between 1980 and 1982 along the Chixoy River (also known as the Río Negro above the Chixoy dam) in Guatemala. The slaughters came at the height of the civil war's violence, when "The army massacred numerous whole villages and committed many other atrocities against suspected guerilla sympathizers. […] The counterinsurgency war made at least 500,000 persons, mostly Indians, into internal or external refugees" (Booth, et al. 2006: 123). As Barbara Rose Johnson explains,

> the Río Negro massacres occurred in an area and at a time when Maya Achí communities were being forcibly displaced by construction of the Chixoy Dam funded by the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Altogether, from 1980 to September 1982, some 447 residents of Río Negro—over half the population—were murdered in a series of four massacres that took place as dam construction was completed and flood waters began to rise. (2003: 27)

As the novel recounts, by the end of the dam's construction in 1983, ten communities had been destroyed by the massacres.

The history of the massacres is reconstructed throughout the novel as the protagonist, an expatriate reporter, recounts the story of his return to his native Guatemala on assignment to write an article about the Chixoy dam in Río Negro. The violence as a result of the dam project is gradually revealed through the protagonist's visits to the various massacre sites and interviews with survivors and local community members. The sporadic insertion of fragments of his completed article provides further context and historical details. The novel's historical component aligns with the observations of political ecologists that throughout Latin America, "Unequal distribution of water is due not only to colonial exclusion and historical usurpation of Indigenous communities' water rights, but also

to contemporary policies," many of which focus on providing water and electricity for industries and mega-cities (Hidalgo, et al. 2017: 69).

As with *Innocent Voices*, "Once Upon a River," and "The Woman of the Sumpul River," the river becomes a deathscape in *The Price of Comfort* in the sense of a site associated with death, mourning, and memorial. In the Mayan communities that he visits, he reads the words from the memorial placards that mark the sites of the massacres. For example:

> Here remains the memory of 54 native brothers and sisters of the Community of Chuategua, Pa Oj Chíi Ixim, Rabinal, Baja Verapaz, that were massacred on the 24th day of November, 1982, in the place named Piedra el Cal, this municipality. Those responsible for this massacre were the Guatemalan Army and the Rabinal Civil Self-Defense Patrol and the responsible parties enjoy their freedom. (28–29)[5]

This passage and others, such as the wording on the memorial placard in Río Negro that he reads, serve as textual markers that resist attempts by national politicians to erase Guatemala's history of terror and genocide. Moreover, his visit to the Rabinal Achí Museum, with its room dedicated to memorializing victims of the massacres, further designates the river as a site of violence resulting from the neo-colonization of Mayan territory for the construction of the Chixoy dam. As the protagonist recalls, "It reminded me of the Holocaust museums that I visited in Washington and Houston" (46).

What distinguishes Arias's novel from the other works analyzed in the present article, however, is the portrayal not only of state sponsored violence at the site of a river, but also the environmental consequences wrought by the forceful imposition of a dam project on local indigenous communities. For example, a local citizen informs the protagonist of the effects of the dam on the river's ecosystem:

> The river's water is very contaminated. The fish have worms, and you can't bathe in the river. The children have suffered from spots on their

5. This and subsequent English translations of passages from *The Price of Comfort* are translated by the author. The original Spanish has been included in footnotes where appropriate.

skin because they go into the water. The river is really no good for anything, not even for washing. A little while ago they put in automatic gates. When it closes, a violent wave comes and then the poor people are stuck without water. They don't even warn us. (141)[6]

Moreover, adds the informant, the dam has caused an abundance of mosquitoes, which, in turn, has resulted in malarial infections (142). The bald hills surrounding the dam are further evidence of its environmental impact (40), and in the novel's concluding chapter the danger of anthropocentric thought is explicitly acknowledged in the reflections of one of the female indigenous characters, who laments, "Mistaken humans believe that they are the superior part of the chain of life, they think they are superior to animals and plants, and that's why they go about polluting so much, when in reality we are the lowest part, we are merely guardians of nature" (276).[7] The contrasting worldviews evident in this passage reflect the principles at the heart of the dispute over the construction of the dam.

The dam construction project is clearly cast in the novel as yet another cycle in Guatemala's history of colonization and neocolonization. Upon returning to Guatemala and interacting with Mayan ethnic groups for his reporting, the protagonist expresses his awareness of his country's colonial legacy when he is unable to follow conversations in one of the local Mayan dialects. He laments, "I felt the sharp pain of conquistadors emerging as if pulled by a soulless forceps" (34).[8] Elsewhere in the novel he acknowledges being moved by the experience of standing in the place where the last Kaqchikel kings walked before being murdered by the conquistador Pedro de Alvarado (176). Moreover,

6. "El agua del río está bien contaminada. Los pescados tienen gusanos, y no se puede bañar. Los niños han padecido de muchas manchas porque se van a meter al agua. El río en verdad no sirve, ni para lavar. Hace poco pusieron unas puertas automáticas. Entonces se cierra se viene un tumbo, y de allí las pobres personas se quedan sin agua. Nosotros nada, sin avisarnos" (141).
7. "Los humanos tan equivocados creen que son la parte superior de la cadena de vida, se creen más que los animales, que las plantas, y por eso andan contaminando tanto, cuando en realidad somos la parte más baja, somos apenas los guardianes de la naturaleza [...]" (276).
8. "Sentí un dolor cortante de conquistadores emergiendo como jalado por un fórceps desangelado" (34)

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the text's allusion to Don Juan Matalab'atz, described as the first Mayan to go before the Spanish court in the sixteenth century, and who refused to kneel before the king, offers both a glimpse of the long history of Mayan resistance to colonial powers as well as a parallel to contemporary dynamics regarding access to land and natural resources. Doña Catarina, an indigenous leader who is raped in an attempt to suppress her activism, articulates the ways in which neocolonial modernization projects are destructive both environmentally and culturally:

> We don't want them to harm the land [...] Without land we are nothing. The land is our mother, our community, our life. We want our land back because it is ours, not the company's. As women, we are worried. The government wants to allow hydroelectric plants and the mining industry to steal our natural resources. How is it possible that the transnationals could come in and send us to the mountains again? (118)[9]

This passage highlights the centrality of land in Mayan culture, both as a matter of subsistence and as a world view in which humans are not held as superior to other elements of the natural world. The loss of access to arable land and clean water thus becomes culturally as well as environmentally destructive. The "again" at the end of the passage emphasizes the cycles of colonization and neocolonization to which the Mayan people have been subjected since the Spanish Conquest. The neocolonial nature of the dam construction project is further underscored by the novel's mention of the fact that corporations from Switzerland, Mexico, US, Italy, Germany, Japan, India, Portugal, and Canada participated in the process of the dam construction in spite of local resistance (26). Arias's novel thus fits well into what Laura Barbas Rhoden describes as Latin American fiction of "ecological imagination,"

9. No queremos que lastimen la tierra [...] Nosotras sin la tierra no somos nada. La tierra es nuestra madre, nuestra comunidad, nuestra vida. Queremos que regrese nuestra tierra, porque es de nosotras, no de la empresa, estamos preocupadas como mujeres. El gobierno quiere meter las hidroeléctricas, la minería, para robar nuestra riqueza natural. ¿Cómo es posible que vengan los transnacionales a mandarnos otra vez a la montaña? (118)

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which mobilizes a discourse of nature "to indict the neoliberal order of late twentieth-century Latin America" (2011: 2).

The description in the first chapter of the artificial lake created by the dam captures the oppressive nature of the project: "Carlos explained to me that at the bottom lay the flooded villages, the plantations of tomatoes, chili peppers, beans and corn now transformed into mud. The pre-Hispanic ruins of rabinaleb' were also lost there. To the right was the dam's fall, brutal in its verticality" (Arias 2015: 43).[10] The image of villages and pre-Hispanic ruins submerged beneath the artificial lake poignantly captures the suppression of the Mayan people as a result of the dam. The description of the dam as "brutal" further evokes the violence done to the ecosystem, its human inhabitants, and their culture. As one informant explains, the majority of the good land was flooded, forcing them to move to higher ground where the terrain is rockier and inarable (116). As the protagonist's article points out, the indifference and disrespect for the Mayan villagers was such that, despite promises from the National Institute of Electricity (INDE), those who survived the massacres were never compensated for their land or resettled as a result of their dislocation (26).

In spite of the death and destruction inflicted by the massacres and dam construction, the novel's concluding chapter leaves open the possibility of hope for the future through continued Mayan resistance. In particular, the text emphasizes the importance of indigenous women in the Mayan rights movement and suggests a need to break with the patriarchal patterns of Guatemala's past. The violence against women throughout the novel, including rape and femicide, reveals the relation between the exploitation of natural resources and the abuse of women that ecofeminists such as Sofía Kearns contend is endemic to patriarchal societies (2006: 115). This aspect of the novel deserves further critical attention beyond the parameters of the present essay, but it is consistent with Arias's recognition of the evolving role of women in traditionally patriarchal societies (1997: 32). The female narrator of the final

10. "Carlos me explicó que en su fondo yacían los pueblos inundados, las plantaciones de tomates, chiles, frijoles y maíz ahora transformadas en cieno. También se perdieron allí las ruinas prehispánicas de los rabinaleb'. Al lado derecho estaba la caída de la presa, brutal en su verticalidad" (43).

chapter alludes to the ongoing decolonial struggle in Guatemala in her statement that, "Colonization is always colonization" (Arias 2015: 282). Nevertheless, she remains steadfast in her commitment to the Mayan struggle: "I believe in Mayan flourishment. In spite of the racial domination, in spite of the genocide, and of all of that, we continue to survive. To be an indigenous woman, for me, has always implied struggle, so I am at peace with it" (266).[11]

BERTA CÁCERES'S STRUGGLE FOR THE GUALCARQUE RIVER IN HONDURAS

The struggle for environmental justice in Central America with regard to river access continues today. Perhaps the most visible example concerns the Gualcarque River, which flows at the edge of a collection of thirteen subsistence farming communities in the department of Intibucá, a predominantly indigenous region in southwestern Honduras. According to Nina Lakhani in her book of investigative journalism, *Who Killed Berta Cáceres: Dams, Death Squads, and an Indigenous Defender's Battle for the Planet*, "The sacred river is a source of spiritual and physical nourishment for the Lenca people. It provides fish to eat, water for their animals to drink, traditional medicinal plants, and fun: with no electricity, let alone internet, the children flock to the river to play and swim. The communities live in harmony with the river and with each other. Or at least they used to" (2020: 12). As Lakhani explains, the Agua Zarca hydroelectric dam was illegally licensed by the neoliberal National Party in 2010 "as part of a package of dam concessions involving dozens of waterways across the country in the aftermath of the 2009 coup—orchestrated by the country's right wing business, religious, political and military elites to oust the democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya" (12). The legal requirement of formal consultation for projects on indigenous territory was ignored prior to the licensing and no proper environmental impact study was conducted (12).

Given the dire consequences of diverting the river away from the needs of the Río Blanco communities, Berta Cáceres,

11. "Yo creo en el florecimiento maya. A pesar de la dominación racial, a pesar del genocidio, de todo eso, seguimos sobreviviendo. Ser mujer indígena para mí siempre implicó lucha, así que yo tranquila" (266).

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a Lenca community activist, led the resistance to the illegal project. In 2015 she was awarded the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize for her opposition to the Agua Zarca dam. She too framed the struggle as another cycle in the history of colonial and neocolonial oppression: "No one expected the Lenca people to stand up against this powerful monster, and yet we indigenous people have been resisting for over 520 years, ever since the Spanish invasion. Seventy million people were killed across the continent for our natural resources, and this colonialism isn't over. but we have power, *compañeros*, and that is why we still exist" (Lakhani 2020: 11). The year after accepting the Goldman Prize, on 2 March 2016 Cáceres was murdered in an attempt to silence her opposition. Although the historical context in Central America has shifted from the period of armed revolutionary conflict to the post-war era, the dynamic of state-sponsored violence against community activists has not disappeared. As Lakhani explains, "Today, security forces are still deployed to protect foreign and national business interests, but belligerent community leaders are tarnished as anti-development criminals and terrorists, rather than as leftist guerillas" (2020: 278).

CONCLUSION

The works analyzed in the present essay are examples of the importance of river imagery in Central American literature and film. *Innocent Voices*, "Once Upon a River," and "The Woman of the Sumpul River" call attention to rivers as sites of historical violence during El Salvador's civil war, which pitted the country's fascist government against a revolutionary movement to liberate the country and reform its neocolonial economic structure. The government's response was characterized by the creation of death squads within its US-backed military, massacres of unarmed campesinos, and the torture and disappearance of suspected FMLN sympathizers. In the Calabozo Massacre and the Sumpul River Massacre, rivers became ground zero in the government's attempt to suppress the resistance. As works inspired by extrajudicial killings in and on the banks of Salvadoran rivers, I have thus argued that the imagery of rivers in *Innocent Voices*, "Once Upon a River," and "The Woman of the Sumpul River" can be

described as deathscapes and speaking wounds that, in certain instances, are also contrasted with their more conventional symbolism of life, recreation, and innocence. Guatemalan novelist Arturo Arias's *The Price of Comfort* also sheds light on river-related violence from Central America's civil war era. However, in contrast to the Salvadoran works analyzed in the first part of this article, through the example of the Chixoy Dam, Arias's novel also highlights the environmental consequences of the neo-colonization of indigenous natural resources. The massacres along the Chixoy River, although part of the Guatemalan government's broader genocide against the Mayan people, were carried out in an effort to pave the way for the construction of an internationally funded dam that has displaced local indigenous citizens and destroyed natural resources vital to their survival. In Honduras, Berta Cáceres's campaign to prevent the illegal construction of the Agua Zarca dam on the Gualcarque River is another example of indigenous struggles across Central America to retain access to ancestral natural resources. Her subsequent assassination is an indication of the high stakes of the battle that she framed as a continuation of indigenous resistance to colonialism. What remains constant throughout the works studied in this essay is their portrayal of rivers as historical sites of colonial contestation.

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THE URUGUAY RIVER

A Permeable Border in South America

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INTRODUCTION

The Uruguay River is an important watercourse in South America. It begins with three minor rivers, the Pelotas, Canoas and Peixe, whose sources are located in the Serra Geral highlands, around 1,800 meters above sea level (Marcuzzo 2017: 1). Today the Uruguay River serves as the international frontier between Brazil and Argentina and between Uruguay and Argentina. It also marks the border between the Brazilian states of Santa Catarina (SC) and Rio Grande do Sul (RS). At the end of its approximately two-thousand kilometers course, it flows into La Plata River, a major estuary close to Buenos Aires in Argentina and Montevideo in Uruguay. The importance of the Uruguay River can be evaluated by the size of its hydrographic basin (fig. 1), formed by dozens of affluents, covering a total area of roughly 349,843 square kilometers (Marcuzzo 2017: 4).

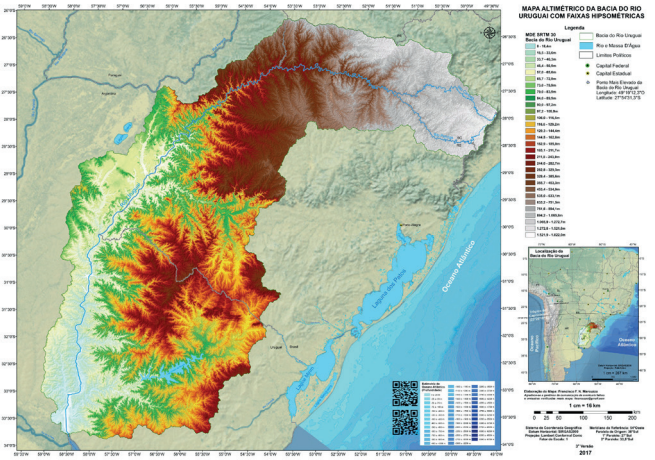

Fig. 1. Uruguay River Basin. Source: Francisco F. N. Marcuzzo, Uruguay River drainage basin: altimetry and areas. *Anais do XXII Simpósio Brasileiro de Recursos Hídricos*, 2017.

This article discusses the social, cultural, environmental and economic importance that the Uruguay River has had for diverse social groups living within its drainage basin from the eighteenth century to the present, considering different forms of interaction with the river and nearby areas. It also discusses the significance of the Uruguay River as a permeable frontier, a place of circulation for merchandise, people, and ideas in the border zone between Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay. Finally, it discusses the profound socio-environmental transformations that took place in the Uruguay River basin over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the attempts to preserve and restore regional environments and landscapes linked to the river.

As research sources, the article uses travellers' reports, the records of employees of the Brazilian State, reports and correspondence by governors, documents relating to the nature conservation units and implanted economic exploration projects. It interprets these sources through environmental history, which includes human societies, but also recognizes the historicity of natural systems, constructing "an open and interactive reading between both" (Pádua 2010: 97).

The environmental history of Brazilian rivers has received the attention of diverse researchers, highlighting Gilmar Arruda (2008), Victor Leonardi (1999), Haruf Espindola (2005), Eunice Sueli Nodari (2019), Janes Jorge (2006), Marluza Harres and Fabiano Q. Rückert (2015) and Bruno Capilé (2018), among others, who have researched human interactions with the river and its surrounding areas.

FIRST INTERACTIONS

The archaeological research showed the presence of indigenous populations belonging to the Tupi-Guarani linguistic subfamily in the valley of the Uruguay River from approximately two-thousand years ago to the present. They were "horticulturists and made their swiddens in a slash-and-burn system, also known as *coivara*." These populations settled in places "with access to rich sources of water and dense forests, where they could reproduce their lifestyle." They chose fertile lands ideal for agriculture, gathered molluscs, and fished in the rivers and lakes, and hunted animals in the forest. Through these activities "they were able to capture

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the necessary proteins and fats, as well as bones, hides, feathers and shells" (Ferrasso and Schmitz 2013: 128).

The accounts of voyages and letters on the apostolic works of the European priest Anton Clemens Sepp of the Company of Jesus provide us with important information on the Jesuit missions established in the drainage basins of the Uruguay, Paraná and Paraguay Rivers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. On his voyage to South America in 1691, the priest Sepp described the rivers as navigable paths to the interior of the continent and was impressed by the abundance of fish, "none of which look like our European varieties," he wrote. The volume was such that "the water tingled with so many fish." In his Christian comprehension of American nature, "this is caused by the fact that since creation of the world nobody has fished here yet" (Sepp 1980: 111).

The Jesuits worked in the Christianization of the Guarani peoples in diverse missions, among them the mission of Yapeyu, situated close to the shore of the Uruguay River, "as large as the Danube near to Vienna" (Sepp 1980: 111). When he became ill in the interior of Paraguay, he was sent to the São Francisco Xavier mission, close to the right bank of the Uruguay River, where "fresher airs cooled my lungs and ended up refreshing my organism as a whole" (197). As well as the missions on the right bank, another seven missions were established on the river's left bank, some of them dozens of kilometers from its waters. In the region of the final stretch of the Uruguay River, further south, was inhabited by the Guenoa-Minuane indigenous people, who had little connection to the Jesuit missions (Bracco 2016: 44).

Although it flowed through the large region of Jesuit missions, a long stretch of the Uruguay River was considered the southern border between the colonial domains of Spain and Portugal in the Treaty of Madrid, signed in 1750. Indigenous resistance to this colonial redivision of the territory generated the Guarani War from 1753 to 1759, involving Christianized Guarani and the troops of Portugal and Spain. Divergences in the demarcation of the territories led to the collapse of this treaty and the outbreak of other conflicts in the south of America over the ensuing years (Golin 2015: 66).

The chronicler Hemetério Velloso da Silveira visited this region of the missions close to the Uruguay River at the start of the twen-

tieth century and observed that the Uruguay River continued to be "abundant in fish. We saw surubi, gilded catfish, flounders, stingrays, pacu, and leporinus of large sizes. Some residents of the town, poor, live off fishing" (Silveira 1909: 388). He also visited Uruguaiana, where he observed the steamboat transportation service for passengers and cargo on the Uruguay River, linking towns on the Brazilian shore with towns and settlements on the Argentinean shore. As well as the steamboats, he observed that there existed, "for the traffic of merchandise and foods from the two countries, more than eighty foreign and national boats like, launches, flatboats, canoes and punts" (415). When he was in São Francisco de Borja, another Jesuit mission, he observed the existence of the Passo de São Borja settlement, a location where one could traverse the Uruguay River during the drier part of the year. However, he wrote that "the high waters on the Uruguay, when the river overflows, flood some of Passo's streets and houses, producing intermittent fevers, vernacularly called Chucho, and sometimes typhoid" (249).

THE FORESTS OF THE URUGUAY RIVER AND YERBA MATE HARVESTING

Along the upper course of the Uruguay River, in the east of the South American continent, at altitudes over 600 metres (fig. 1), we find Mixed Ombrophilous Forest or Araucaria Forest (*Araucaria angustifolia*), which dominates the region's canopy and landscape. Below this species grow many other trees and plants, inhabited by a variety of fauna, making this forest an impressive example of biodiversity. The indigenous populations and fauna obtained *pinhão* in this forest, the edible seed of the Araucaria pine which constitute an important food source in the region.

Following the course of the Uruguay River westward, at lower altitudes, another kind of forest begins to appear. In the travel report of the French merchant Nicolau Dreys, first published in 1839, the forests of the Uruguay River, still unknown to Europeans, formed one of the boundaries of the Jesuit mission territory established on the left shore of the river (1990: 72).

In 1857 and 1858 the engineer Francisco Rave coordinated an expedition that travelled through the northwest of the province of Rio Grande do Sul, visited the immense forests "that spread along

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the shores of the Uruguay" and perceived the changes in the forest's composition with the absence of Araucaria pine and the occurrence of angico, cedar, laurel and palm species (Rave 1858).

At the end of the nineteenth century, the chronicler Evaristo Affonso de Castro recorded the existence of this large forest on the left-hand shore, containing abundant numbers of animals and plants from which, in his evaluation, timber could be extracted. Castro transcribed the report of an exploratory expedition led and recorded by the German surveyor Maximilian Beschoren:

> Filled with wonder, I contemplated these forests that line the Upper Uruguay, whose gigantic vegetation entrances the observer and is entirely unaware of the potency of the human arm, raised to hurl the trees to the ground; they are representatives of a centuries-old plant life and moreover, are still virgin forests. (Castro 1887: 249)

The surveyor's views are similar to those described by the priest Sepp as they both believed themselves to be standing before untouched nature. Immediately, he considered the possibility of felling part of the forest as a form of economic exploration. Later in the same report, he would write:

> Our joy was indescribable. In this place we made echo the roar of our guns, announcing to these centuries-old forests that civilized men found themselves there filled with jubilation at having reached the end of their explorations and astonished by so much natural beauty, were contemplating the grandiose spectacle that only the hand of the Creator of the Universe could show to man in the powerful scene in which he unveils the majestic Uruguay. If there are moments in life that a man can never forget, this is one of them! (261)

In another work from the end of the nineteenth century, Beschoren registers his own admiration for the "extraordinary vegetation of the forest of the Upper Uruguay," particularly along the river shore, which "consists of an impenetrable tangle of spines and vines of the most diverse species. Wising to enter the riverside forest without a machete is a useless endeavour. I had never encountered a forest like that, so dense!" (Beschoren 1989: 49). Another excerpt from his narrative reads as follows:

> What an immense and varied vegetation confronts us! What gigantic trees! Vines wind from one to another in multiple forms, covered by rare

and beautiful orchids. On the ground an impenetrable tangle of ferns, thorns, reeds, vines and fallen trees. The jungle alarms and terrifies the invader due to the impact of the plants and inextricable chaos. (104)

The surveyor ends his book by reinforcing the idyllic image of the valley of the Uruguay River: "In all the Province, I know of no other place so marvellous as the valley of the Goio-En, in Nonoai. This territory, covering hundreds of square miles, is for the most part still virgin land, covered by woods, virgin forest, a ground still untouched by civilized man" (Beschoren 1989: 192).

In 1893, the Swedish traveller and botanist Carl Axel Magnus Lindman also wrote about the existence of a forest formed by large trees associated with other levels or layers of vegetation. This forest was constituted by species like cabreúva, inga, angico, camboatá, sweet cotton, açoita-cavalo, canela preta, yerba mate, laurel, guayaibi, tarumã, ipê and others (1974: 204). Yet another chronicler, Hemetério Velloso da Silveira, wrote of the variety of the flora and fauna existing in the territory pertaining to the Jesuit missions, in the basin of the Uruguay River. His book, dated 1909, contains lists of animal and plant species that inhabited the region, testifying to the biodiversity that still marked these ecosystems at the beginning of the twentieth century.

All these authors refer to the forest present along a stretch of the Uruguay River Valley, covered by Temperate Deciduous Forest, a form of vegetation belonging to the Atlantic Rainforest Biome (*Mata Atlantica*), which covers around one million square kilometers (Dean 1996: 24), to which the Mixed Ombrophilous Forest also belongs.

Among these plants of the Temperate Deciduous Forest, we can highlight yerba mate (*Ilex paraguariensis*), catalogued by the French botanist Auguste de Saint-Hilaire in the nineteenth century. The tree's leaves and branches, dried and ground, are used to prepare a drink highly popular in the south of the continent due to its property as a stimulant, since it contains caffeine. Its consumption has been a cultural practice of diverse indigenous peoples inhabiting this territory for thousands of years. Concentrations of this tree, forming the yerba forests, exist in portions of the large drainage basins of the Uruguay, Jacuí, Paraná, Iguaçu and Paraguay Rivers, which were explored economically.

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During the nineteenth century, a large poor population obtained their livelihood working in the extraction and preparation of yerba mate from the forests, one of the main trade products originating in South America (Gerhardt 2013; 78). Some of this yerba mate was transported in carts or on animals to the shores of the Uruguay River from where it would continue, on boats, to the foreign consumer markets of Argentina and Uruguay. Central to this trade was the port of Itaqui, situated on the right shore of the Uruguay River, through which thousands of tons of yerba mate were exported (Linhares 1969: 105).

Diverse travellers, government employees and chroniclers warned of the damage caused by the intense exploration of the yerba forests. The Brazilian engineer Francisco Rave, among others, visited lands on the left shore of the Uruguay River in 1858 and recorded the following:

> It's a pity to see the damage caused in these yerba forests, they unthinkingly cut down trees less than four years old; they sometimes harvest so much yerba that half of it remains in the woods due to the lack of transportation, and with no consideration that these yerba forests are becoming more and more impoverished, the moment perhaps arriving when this food export crop, so important to the Province, will cease to exist. (Rave 1858)

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an attempt was made by the Brazilian and Argentinean governments to conserve the yerba forests (Gerhardt, 2013: 154). However, the intense exploration and diminution of the yerba trees accompanied a larger movement of exploring and reducing the once huge forest existing in the Uruguay River Valley, as we shall see below.

COLONIZATION IN THE URUGUAY RIVER VALLEY

In addition to the indigenous populations mentioned previously, this area also harboured a "social group called caboclo, formed by the contact between Indians and European settlers, especially the Portuguese. Recent scholars have dedicated their studies to recover the history of these peasants who were largely forgotten in the earlier literature on colonization" (Nodari 2018: 84). The caboclos can also be characterized by their way of life and social forms, linked to subsistence agriculture, fishing, hunting, yerba

mate harvesting and animal breeding, especially pigs (Gerhardt 2006; Silva 2014).

On the left shore of the Uruguay River there was a colonization or reoccupation of the lands directed, mainly, by the governments of Brazil and the state of Rio Grande do Sul during the end of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth. The public and private colonization projects divided up the lands into small rural lots, which were sold to settlers, descendants of European immigrants.

The Argentinean ethnographer Juan Bautista Ambrosetti, traversing the Uruguay River at the end of the nineteenth century, observed that areas close to the Brazilian side of the river were deforested and cultivated, while on the Argentinean side the same region "was still virgin, wild, with its exuberant vegetation" (Ambrosetti 1983: 106–107; Nodari 2015: 312). The expression 'virgin' is not adequate since it ignores thousands of years of indigenous interaction with the region's forest and rivers. However, Ambrosetti saw the beginning of the changes that would become more intense in the twentieth century: the colonization on the Brazilian side, the deforestation for agriculture, the construction of a colonial landscape and the displacement of the caboclos to the Uruguay River Valley. The Santa Rosa colony, installed in 1914 on lands close to the river, was intended to be occupied by caboclos who wished to acquire a rural lot, altering their way of life, and converting them into settlers. The project was not as successful as hoped and as the years passed the colony became a space occupied by settlers (Gerhardt 2013: 133).

Colonization of the right shore of the Uruguay River, in Brazilian territory, was predominantly conducted by private companies. Several of these companies received lands from the federal or state government as compensation for the construction of roads or railways and sold these public lands to third parties or directly to the settlers. The largest firm to operate in southern Brazil was the Brazilian Development and Colonization Company, which in many cases ended up selling part of its land to other companies such as the *Volksverein für die Deutschen Katholiken* in Rio Grande do Sul (the People's Association for the German Catholics in Rio Grande do Sul) (Nodari 2018: 89).

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The Porto Novo colony later renamed Itapiranga, in Santa Catarina state, was settled during the second decade of the twentieth century, mainly by descendants of Germans coming from the state of Rio Grande do Sul and a small number from Germany. The lands were located between the Macuco and Pepery-Guaçú Rivers. To the south, it was bordered by the Uruguay River (Rio Grande do Sul); to the east, by Porto Feliz (later Mondaí); and to the west, by the Pepery-Guaçú River, which also forms the international border with Argentina. In 1932, Carl Middeldorf described the colony in a brochure published to attract German settlers. The author of the brochure made comparisons between this new colony and Europe:

> The colony of the Uruguay River appears to the visitor's eyes as a true picture of Wonderland... With great scenic charm, this colonial kingdom extends from the banks of the Uruguay River to the small rivers [penetrating] into the forest. All of them flow into the Uruguay River, which similar to the Rhine River, dominates and protects this flourishing land. Old memories of rural landscapes of the regions of the Rhine and Moselle arise when observing the river, the land, and the forest. (Middeldorf 1932: 4–5)

Many sawmills were installed across the region of colonization, combining timber extraction, 'land clearance,' agricultural production and colonial livestock farming. The forest held an ambivalent meaning for the settlers: on one hand it represented an obstacle and a frontier between civilization and the wilderness, but on the other it was a supplier of raw materials essential to the installation of the population in the new environment (Gerhardt 2009). From the forest, timber was extracted for the construction of houses, firewood for ovens and fires, animal game that formed part of the family diet, and timber for immediate commerce, among other natural goods available. Fishing on the Uruguay River and its nearby tributaries was a cultural practice of the settlers, who adopted indigenous and caboclo techniques such as the attraction of fish with food, the 'seva,' and the use of traps, the 'pari.' Hook and net were also used. Agriculture on the shores of the river, practiced by the settlers, benefited from the renewed soil fertility in the floods and the humid and less cold climate in the winter (Onghero and Franceschi 2009: 116–119).

The Temperate Deciduous Forest, present on both shores of the initial stretch of the Uruguay River basin, admitted by the chroniclers and travellers, as well as the immense biodiversity, contained a large number of trees whose wood is of excellent quality and has a use in human activities. Species include cedar (*Cedrela fissilis*), cabreúva (*Myrocarpus frondosus*), laurels (*Cordia ecalyculata* and *Cordia trichotoma*), cangerana (*Cabralea canjerana*), angico (*Parapiptadenia rigida*), garapa (*Apuleia leiocarpa*) and guajuvira (*Cordia americana*), among many others (Ruschel, et al. 2003: 157; Giehl 2020). Some stretches of the river were characterized by Temperate Deciduous Forest on the first fifty kilometers from the shore, giving way to predominantly with Mixed Ombrophilous Forest and meadow or savannah vegetation.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the trunks of the trees felled in the forest were transported to the Uruguay River, where they were lashed together in rafts (fig. 2) and steered downriver during the high-water season for sale in Argentina.

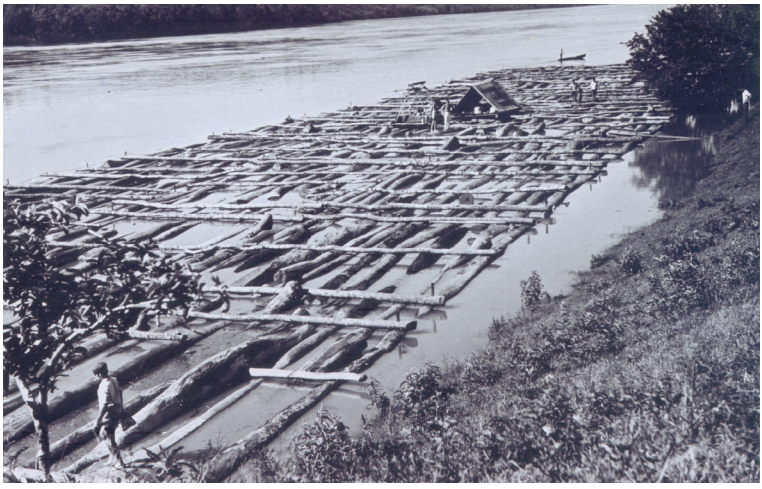

Fig.2. Wooden raft in Mondaí, Brazil.Source: Archive of the Western Santa Catarina Memory Centre (CEOM) of the Chapecó Region Community University (Unochapecó).

The journey lasted five to eight days and represented risks for the workers who steered the rafts (Bellani 1991: 222–230). Sometimes the timber was processed in sawmills before being transported on the river, principally the trunks of Araucaria pine

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extracted from the Mixed Ombrophilous Forest, which was not abundant in areas near the Uruguay River.

CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY

The activities of yerba mate harvesting, timber extraction and the deforestation promoted by the colonization projects focused on agriculture rapidly transformed the environment and constructed a new landscape in the Uruguay River drainage basin. There was an accentuated loss of biodiversity during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is estimated that the Temperate Deciduous Forest is one of the most devastated environments of Brazil with just around 3% of the original area remaining, distributed in small fragments that still suffer constant anthropic pressures (Nodari 2017: 50). Some government initiatives resulted in the creation of conservation units, specifically two fully protected public parks close to the Uruguay River, which we discuss below.

The Turvo State Park was created in 1947, in the municipality of Derrubadas, RS, on the left shore of the Uruguay River, has a surface area of 17,491 hectares and aims to conserve an important fragment of Temperate Deciduous Forest, inhabited by species under risk of extinction like the collared peccary (*Pecari tajacu*), the tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*) and many other species of reptiles, amphibians, birds, mammals, insects, plants and fungi. Also living in the Park are jaguars (*Panthera onca*), a large feline that "belongs to the Panthera genus, like the lion (*Panthera leo*), tiger (*Panthera tigris*) and leopard (*Panthera pardus*)." The jaguar "is the only panther of the Americas" (Franco and Silva 2020: 4) and is threatened with extinction. In this Park, on the course of the Uruguay River, is the Yucumã Falls, called the Moconá Falls by the Argentineans, which is one of the world's largest linear waterfalls (Sema 2005: 1). The falls are visited by tourists during the dry season when they become more visible.

At exactly the same point of the river but on its right shore is located Moconá Park, part of the Argentinean Selva Misionera or the Bosque Atlántico del Alto Paraná, an enormous tract of forest that extends from the Uruguay River many kilometers into the interior of Argentina as far as the Iguazú National Park and is home

to diverse forms of wildlife. There are around 914,823 hectares in areas of relatively continuous forest (República Argentina, 2007: 35). Currently, this forest is threatened by illegal timber extraction. Due to its importance for the conservation of biological diversity, especially the jaguar, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) included it on the list of priority ecoregions for global conservation (FVSA 2020; WWF 2020). The wildlife in the Turvo State Park would be less abundant and diverse if the immense Selva Misionera did not exist on the other side of the river, a permeable frontier between the two countries. The circulation of animals and genes between the two forest areas is of fundamental importance for the conservation of biodiversity.

An important biodiversity place is the Espigão Alto State Park, situated in the municipality of Barracão, RS, very close to the Uruguay River, has existed since 1949 and has an area of 1,325 hectares, composed of Mixed Ombrophilous Forest and Dense Ombrophilous Forest. It is classified under a full protection category, allowing environmental education projects, and is home to an important regional fauna at risk of extinction. However, its small size hinders the conservation of some larger species of birds and mammals. The Park's vegetation includes species characteristic of the Upper Uruguay River, like pineapple guava (*Acca sellowiana*), xaxim (*Dicksonia sellowiana*) and jaborandi (*Pilocarpus pennatifolius*), among others. The presence of invasive exotic plants (*Pinus* spp., *Eucalyptus* spp. and *Hovenia dulcis*) and the lack of public employees to tend and manage the area were identified as problems in this Park (Defap 2004: 40, 79, 122, 152).

The Fritz Plaumann State Park is a conservation unit situated along the Uruguay River, in the municipality of Concórdia, in the Brazilian state of Santa Catarina, with an area of 741 hectares. It was created recently, in 2003, as a compensation measure for the environmental impacts caused by the completion of construction on the Itá Hydroelectric Plant in the year 2000.

This became the only conservation unit of Temperate Deciduous Forest existing on the right shore of the Uruguay River. Although the park contains a small conserved fragment of this forest, its creation allows the regeneration of the forest vegetation and functions as a refuge for the region's fauna. One problem is the presence

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of the exotic American bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeianus*) in the area around the park (Fatma 2014: 25, 208, 213). This frog is a native of North America and was introduced into Brazil, where it adapted and now interferes in the dynamic of the communities of native amphibians (Preuss 2017: 26).

Another small portion of conserved forest land is situated a few kilometers from the Uruguay River, in the Nonoai Indigenous Land, demarcated in 1911 by the Brazilian government for occupation by Kaingang and Guarani populations of the region. This Indigenous land is 34,976 hectares in size, fifteen-thousand of which comprise a forest reserve in which Mixed Ombrophilous Forest predominates. From the 1960s to the 1990s there were conflicts over lands involving indigenous peoples, farmers and the Rio Grande do Sul state government. The result was the recent recognition of the indigenous population's right to the land and to the forest reserve for sustainable use, but the tensions and debates between the two social groups, the government and the environmentalists continue (Bringmann 2017: 179; Carini and Tedesco 2012: 55).

OTHER ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Diverse economic activities were developed in the waters and lands close to the Uruguay River. One of them is pig breeding as small-scale livestock farming for the sustenance of caboclo and settler families, for sale to local markets, or, more recently, as producers integrated with the large pig and poultry abattoirs now operating in the south of Brazil, in particular in the west of Santa Catarina state. This industrial-scale activity exacerbated the problem of contamination of soils, surface waters and subterranean waters by animal waste. Some of this contamination reaches the Uruguay River via the affluents in the drainage basin (Winckler, et al. 2017: 240–241). The flows of people and goods, between one shore and the other and between the different municipalities along the river, are known for the number of small ports, river crossing points (*passos*) and bridges that exist. In the absence of bridges, people and vehicles cross by ferryboat.

With the modernization of agriculture and the predominance of soybean monocropping from the 1960s onward, the socio-environmental problems worsened. The untreated urban and industrial

waste and the residues of fertilizers and other agrochemicals that reach the Uruguay River, further harm the quality of its waters, according to studies conducted in farming regions on both sides of the drainage basin (Ternus, et al. 2011; Fepam 2005).

As one of its solutions to the oil crisis of the 1970s, the Brazilian government provided financial incentives through the National Alcohol Program (Proálcool) to companies producing ethanol fuel for automobiles and in the 1980s, the Alpox SA company installed an ethanol plant in the region occupied by the São Francisco Xavier mission. This site was chosen because the microclimate of the Uruguay River Valley prevents frost from forming and thus enables sugar cane cultivation. Alpox SA soon closed due to financial problems and a group of small farmers from the region, organized in the Porto Xavier Sugar Cane Producers Cooperative (Coopercana), took over the bankrupt company and reactivated the plant. In 2004, after socioenvironmental studies, Coopercana obtained an operating license. The main problem of this activity is treatment of effluents and other waste generated before discarding them in the environment, since they are pollutants and are produced in large volumes (Rambo and Puhl 2005: 93; Coopercana 2004).

In 2011 Coopercana had 297 associates in Porto Xavier and neighboring municipalities, mostly small family farmers, who found ethanol production a stable source of income. In the same year they harvested about 1,600 hectares of sugarcane and maintained, in their properties, the production of soybean for market and food for self-consumption. Ethanol production in the state of Rio Grande do Sul represented, in 2011, only 0.21% of Brazilian production, concentrated in the state of São Paulo. Coopercana's production scale is small, but it has social importance, as it enables family property and generates work and income, especially in the period of manual harvesting and industrial production. Most of the associates are descended from immigrants who settled in the region in the colonization projects. Caboclos also inhabit these lands of the Uruguay River Valley, but are peripherally linked to the cooperative, usually as occasional workers (Coopercana 2004; Nascimento and Dörr, 2012).

Fishing for food, for trade or for sport is still a socially important activity on the Uruguay River, but is jeopardized by the growing

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contamination of its waters. The production of irrigated rice may be contributing to this contamination since it uses chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides. The south of Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay are rice producers on the floodplains of the drainage basin of the middle and lower Uruguay River. This crop shares the same space, a strip of permeable frontier along both shores of the Uruguay River where the environmental conditions are favourable for this agricultural model.

Frontier culture is present throughout the narratives and oral tradition of the population living on the border region shared by Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay (Hartmann 2005), in which the river is a constant presence. Both sides of the border also share a common history and memory, typified by the presence of the Jesuit reductions, extensive livestock farming, trade in yerba mate and wood, territorial conflicts, landscapes and biomes, flood patterns, and the smuggling of goods (Flores 2012). In addition, the coexistence of Brazilians, Argentines and Uruguayans developed a vocabulary that brought the Spanish and Portuguese languages closer and a cultural identity. Moreover, three music festivals take place in the border region and have the Uruguay River as one of the themes: the Barranca Festival in São Borja, the Festival of Thematic Music in Uruguaiana, both in Brazil, and the Correntino Folklore Festival, held in São Tomé, Argentina. Furthermore, the song "Balseiros do rio Uruguai," composed by Barbosa Lessa in the 1970s and made famous by the voice of Cenair Maicá, as well other songs, adopt this river as the theme.

The knowledge, skills and tools of the 'Balseiros,' the wood raft men, are understood today as being part of the cultural heritage. In Itá, SC, the Balseiro Museum was created as an effort to highlight the memory and heritage of this social group. The municipality schools in connection with the Museum, promotes student consciousness of the 'Balseiro' activities. The aim to enhance recognition of the 'Balseiro' cultural heritage by tourism promoters, is an important economic activity linked to the Uruguay River (Zen and Fontanari 2019).

The memories of living with the river also include floods, especially those that caused damage to homes, plantations and other buildings, such as the flood of 1965. The sociability between

the inhabitants on both shores of the Uruguay River has been promoted, over the last decades, through popular parties and football games. During the religious celebration in honor of The Virgin of the Navigators, held in Porto Goio-Ên, in the municipality of Erval Grande, RS, a river procession was organized, accompanied by songs and Christian prayers. The flatter shores of the river, forming beaches, are the space for leisure, rest, socializing and bathing during the summer (Onghero and Franceschi 2009: 119–122).

HYDROELECTRIC PLANTS

In the second half of the twentieth century various hydroelectric plants were implanted in the basin of the Uruguay River. They increased the generation of electricity for Brazil but created social and environmental problems. We highlight some of the plants that have had a major socio-environmental impact.

A consortium formed by four Brazilian public companies and seven private companies, some of them transnationals, was responsible for the construction of the Machadinho Hydroelectric Plant from 1998 to 2001. The plant's installation led to the disappropriation of the lands of small farmers and to conflicts over compensation payments for the losses or the resettlement of affected families. The Brazilian government declared the project a public utility and limited the right of defense of those people living in the flooded area. The Movement of People Affected by Dams ("MAB" or *Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens*) played an important role in the organization of the farmers, in negotiating with the consortium of companies and in the legal disputes (Krzysczak 2019: 26, 33, 216; Consórcio Machadinho 2020: 1–2).

Another construction, the Itá Hydroelectric Plant, was built on the Uruguay River between 1986 and 2001 following a concession of the Brazilian government for private corporations. The plant project required the relocation of the town of Itá, located in the state of Santa Catarina, and its residents in the 1990s to a new urban area constructed close to the reservoir that flooded the original town. Arable lands were also flooded, provoking the displacement of small farmers, who organized to claim compensation payments or resettlement, sometimes on lands far from those they lost. As well as the environmental problems, the Itá Hydroelectric

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Plant produced changes in the landscape and cultural, symbolic and identity losses for the local populations (Klanovicz and Forcelini 2018: 176; Radaelli 2010: 52).

The Barra Grande plant was also built by a group of private companies on the Pelotas River, one of the affluents that join to form the Uruguay River and began to operate in 2005 with a regular power output of 380 megawatts. The lack formed by damming the river affected 1,516 farming families that had to leave their lands and were settled in other places. The construction of this plant is linked to the denunciation of fraud in its environmental licensing, with the omission of the existence of around four-thousand hectares of well-preserved Mixed Ombrophilous Forest and other forms of secondary vegetation. The social mobilization and legal processes were not sufficient, however, to prevent the huge socioenvironmental damage caused by the construction of this plant (Prochnow 2005: 6–14; Ruppenthal 2013: 20, 27, 64; Espindola 2015: 161).

People directly and indirectly affected by hydroelectric plants call themselves "affected by dams" and are considered, broadly, in international discussions as "environmental refugees" or "environmental migrants" (Nodari 2017), as well as "victims of development" (Renk and Winkler 2019). Whatever the term used, those affected by the dams suffer the action of the agents of economic development, which are the State and corporations, where they have low capacity for reaction and negotiation. Most of the reaction and negotiation actions can be attributed to the performance of the Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB), which took its first regional steps in the 1980s, gradually transforming itself into a national organization active in defense of those affected. The hydroelectric plants avoid, almost entirely, the reproduction of migratory fish and decreased fishing in some parts, particularly when the water is diverted from the original river course, as in hydroelectric Foz do Chapecó (Oliveira and Aguiar 2013).

Recently, the construction of the Garabi-Panambi Binational Hydroelectric Complex on the border between Argentina and Brazil came into debate. The complex would be built with public and private financial resources from both countries (Rocha and Nunes 2017; Eletrobras 2013). The construction of the two projected hydro-

electric plants will affect the territory and population of dozens of municipalities in Brazil and Argentina. Several public, religious and community institutions on both sides of the river have mobilized against the project, which threatens fundamental human rights. One of the points of tension for the environmental movements refers to the Salto do Yucumã and "the Turvo State Park, which also corresponds to the Core Zone of the Atlantic Forest Biosphere Reserve, which would be affected by the Panambi hydroelectric plant." In 2015, after social pressure, the Brazilian Federal Court suspended the environmental licensing of the project (Nodari 2017: 60–61). In 2016, was created the Movement of People Affected by Hydro-Dams (MAR) in Latin America, which goes beyond national borders in defense of populations that have common problems. On the other hand, in 2019, the governments of Brazil and Argentina again discussed the resumption of the Garabi-Panambi hydroelectric project, with a risk of worsening socio-environmental conflicts in the Uruguay River basin.

The arguments of the companies are based on the demand of energy for industrial activities and also of the lower economic, social and environmental relative cost of hydroelectric energy. Private companies that invest in the construction of hydroelectric plants are also the main consumers of the energy generated. Compared to thermal and nuclear power, hydroelectric power is considered clean and cheap by investors; however, social movements defend another model, decentralized and based on alternative forms of generation, such as solar, wind power and small hydroelectric plants (Oliveira and Aguiar 2013). Currently, alternative ways to thermal, nuclear and hydroelectric plants, such as solar and wind power are increasing in the country and are the ones that causes less damage to the environment, to the culture heritage and to the people.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

One constant over the course of the centuries is the complexity of human interaction with the Uruguay River. Different human groups relate in diverse ways to the waters and the lands close to the river, a space that includes both the landscape and the dynamic of the interactions that happen there. While

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some human populations, like the Guarani and Kaingang indigenous peoples and the caboclos, established a lengthy symbiosis with the river and with the valley's forests, the settlers produced a rapid transformation marked by deforestation and agriculture.

The forests exalted within the pages of travel reports in the past and very often seen as obstacles by the immigrants lost space to industry and to commerce in the villages. In the rural areas, agriculture and livestock farming completely changed the landscape. With the modernization of agriculture from the 1960s, this process of altering the landscapes and ecosystems quickened pace. Today there remain small isolated fragments of Mixed Ombrophilous Forest and Temperate Deciduous Forest in the Brazilian territory, conserved in parks and protected areas that confront a variety of problems toward their goal of conserving biodiversity and ecosystems.

Today, farming based on monocrops, chemical inputs, mechanization, and irrigation does not promote the conservation of water resources, biodiversity, and ecosystems, or protect human health. In the words of Donald Worster, we need more than a technical vision, we "require a new form of perception, new mental frameworks, a new ethics regulating agricultural practices and policies" (2008: 38). It demands "learning to think like a river." Worster refers mainly to large-scale irrigated agriculture, practiced in the United States of America and other parts of the world. This model of agriculture is not present on the banks of the Uruguay River, but the author's argument that this and other human activities require water and must respect the limits established by hydrological cycles, applies to the region under study. Many of the actions and interactions with the Uruguay River in recent decades have been motivated by economic interests and have disrespected the dynamics of waters and ecosystems. The main intervention was the damming of the river, the interruption of its natural flow and the alteration of the way of life of social groups whose culture was linked to its waters.

The construction of hydroelectric plants along the Uruguay River has environmental and social costs that must be re-evaluated by human societies. The small amount of electricity generated by the Barra Grande Hydroelectric Plant, for example, when

compared to other hydroelectric plants in Brazil, fails to justify the immense and irreparable environmental damage provoked by its construction. The settlers, those who settled in the Uruguay valley as small farmers in previous decades, were affected by the waters of the river, dammed to form the plant reservoirs.

Since the 1980s, several organized social movements, especially the MAB, have challenged the industrial development model based on the construction of hydroelectric dams. These movements exist on both sides of the river, in Brazil and Argentina, because social and environmental problems are common. Hydroelectric projects sometimes bring together the interests of governments and private corporations that operate beyond the national border demarcated by the river.

Over the period studied, the Uruguay River was a permeable frontier. It permitted and promoted interactions among the human societies who lived on its shores and between them and the river. More than a border between different territories and countries, it marked a space of relations and created a border zone in which the river is an essential element. Culturally, an identity linked to the river was created, a feeling of belonging to that territory, an appreciation of the landscapes of its banks and the recognition of the river as a socio-environmental heritage. This identity was formed through the long historical trajectory of coexistence and interaction of various human groups with the Uruguay River, composed of individual and collective memories related to change and continuity in the natural and built environments of this hydrographic basin.

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IMAGINING RIVERS: THE AESTHETICS, HISTORY, AND POLITICS OF AMERICAN WATERWAYS

A Conversation between Lawrence Buell and Christof Mauch

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This contribution features a transatlantic conversation between Christof Mauch, environmental historian and Americanist from Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, and Lawrence Buell, literary scholar and 'pioneer' of ecocriticism from Harvard University. Buell's *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (1995) marked the first major attempt to understand the green tradition of environmental writing, nonfiction as well as fiction, beginning in colonial times and continuing into the present day. With Thoreau's *Walden* as a touchstone, this seminal book provided an account of the place of nature in the history of Western thought. Other highly acclaimed monographs include *Writing for an Endangered World* (2001), a book that brought industrialized and exurban landscapes into conversation with one other, and *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (2009), which provides a critical survey of the ecocritical movement since the 1970s, with an eye to the future of the discipline.

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CHRISTOF MAUCH: For a long time, from antiquity through to early modern times, philosophers and writers have seen nature—and often rivers—as the driving force of history. *Aether*, *aer*, *aqua*, and *terra* were seen as essential for human health; and historians,

starting with Herodotus in his theory of cyclical floods (for Herodotus Egypt was "a gift from the Nile") have seen a strong correlation between the thriving of culture and the prosperity of nature. How and why did this understanding change over time?

LAWRENCE BUELL: I believe that the ancient correlation still endures, although less securely. The chief reason for attenuation may be that urbanization dims understanding of the ways cities depend upon natural systems in order to function. A large fraction of every metropolitan population has little conception of how its food is grown and sourced, of where its waste ends up, of where the raw materials for its manufactured goods come from, and so on.

CM: North American literature has produced some great works on rivers. Powerful poems such as Langston Hughes's "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," Henry David Thoreau's classic *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, and novels like James Dickey's *Deliverance*. In the global imagination, however, no author is more present than Mark Twain. His *Life on the Mississippi* was adapted as a TV movie and a stage musical, and it was translated into multiple languages. I read it as a teenager, in German, alongside *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Both books are unforgettable to this day. The river in Twain's memoir is both an agent of nature and one that carries memories. I remember Twain's books because they brought exotic, wild, and adventurous places and times across the Atlantic.

LB: Rivers as outlets for wanderlust, as escape routes for slaves, as arenas of navigational adventure and challenge, as meeting sites for cross-sections of humanity, as places of beauty and ever-shifting hazard—all these Mark Twain renders unforgettably.

CM: What makes Mark Twain such an over-towering figure in river-writing? What are your own favorite readings on waterways—from around the globe and from the US?

LB: In addition to the books you mention, others that have made an impact on me—not a complete list, mind you—are Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*; the "Old Man" sequence of William Faulkner's *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem (*aka *The Wild Palms)*; Ami-

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tav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*; Alejo Carpentier's *The Lost Steps* (*Los pasos perdidos*); the Scottish novelist Neil Gunn's plangent memoir novel *Highland River*; and Rachel Carson's overlooked *Under the Sea Wind* on the marine life of the Chesapeake Bay. John Wesley Powell's *The Exploration of the Colorado River and Its Canyons* is a landmark of American cultural history if not quite a literary classic.

CM: Thomas Jefferson declared that the view of the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah river was "worth a voyage across the Atlantic." Emanuel Leutze's spectacular painting of "George Washington crossing the Delaware" has shaped the national memory to this day. Philip Freneau called the Mississippi "the prince of rivers in comparison of whom the Nile is but a small rivulet, and the Danube a ditch." In contrast to some of the big rivers around the globe (the Danube runs through ten countries, the Nile through nine, the Rhine belongs to Switzerland as much as to Germany and the Netherlands), almost all rivers in the US are "national rivers." From a European perspective, it seems that American rivers have taken on a distinct patriotic identity. Would you agree? And if so, how would you explain it?

LB: The Mississippi River—and its tributaries: the whole drainage basin—is certainly the example par excellence of American riverine nationalism—the vastness of its system and its geographical centrality cater to the American cult of bigness—although you're quite right to point out that it's by no means the only one. The appropriation of rivers in service of national iconography isn't US-specific, by any means, however. The Thames, the Ganges, the Yellow River, and the Yangtze are comparable cases.

CM: In her work on river deltas in the Netherlands and England, Eveline de Smalen, a young, Dutch literary scholar, has argued that Dutch literature on rivers is preoccupied "with city life," whereas the English tradition has often (and especially in the wake of Raymond Williams' focus on "the country") emphasized the rural as an important counter-world to the industrialized cityscapes that have sprung up since the nineteenth century. What explains the national and indeed exceptionalist meanings that rivers have taken on?

LB: The key predictor, I believe, is the extent to which a major riverway falls within national boundaries. but individual nations may also lay rival claims to rivers that flow across borders, as with the Nile for Egypt versus Ethiopia (for Ethiopia the Blue Nile) and in fiction the White Nile of Scholastique Mukasonga's powerful novel about the origins of Rwandan genocide [*Our Lady of the Nile*], near one of whose sources lies the cloistered upscale girl's school on which the narrative centers.

CM: During my first transcontinental flight across North America, nothing struck me more than the geometry and rigid organization of the terrain. 'The grid,' which signifies the division of land into property, is a signature feature of 'American space.' With its roots in the Land Ordinance of 1785, the meridians and baselines that have inscribed themselves in the landscape appear to exert rigid order and disciplinary control. The cadastral system thus stands in opposition to what otherwise appears to be a rather disorganized and chaotic nature, with a diverse topography and meandering watercourses. I find it intriguing that your monograph *Writing for an Endangered World* culminates in a chapter titled "Watershed Aesthetics," which looks at the natural world as a drainage basin. What triggered your interest in the watershed?

LB: What chiefly inspired "Watershed Aesthetics," as the chapter suggests, was my attraction to the American bioregionalist movement's conception of environmental belonging as the basis of cultural citizenship and, in particular, its vision of the importance of place-connectedness as the basis of cultural identity and its critique of the adequacy of jurisdictional units for understanding the phenomenon of environmental belonging. It honestly didn't occur to me at the time that to feature watersheds as the book's last exhibit might leave a misleading impression of the overall environmental imaginary. If so, I hope that a later essay in which US cadastralism figures centrally makes partial amends: "Antipodal Propinquities," in *Reading Across the Pacific: Australia-US Intellectual Histories*, edited by Robert Dixon and Nicholas Birns.

CM: Environmental historian Donald Worster has argued that the history of the American West begins and ends with water. While many see the ranch, the open prairie, and the cowboy

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as central to the mythology of the West, Worster claims that canals and irrigation ditches, dams, and reservoirs should be seen as the true representation of the American west. In *Rivers of Empire*, he criticizes a "hydraulic society" that boosts agribusiness elites while sidelining small homesteaders. His vision is for more democratic, bioregionalist development. Do you see similar criticism in literary works?

LB: I heartily agree that the reengineering of watercourses has underwritten ranching and cowboy culture—and western economic development generally. So too, however, with megascale transport networks like railways and highways. Accordingly, in US literary history—in writers such as Mary Austin, Frank Norris, Willa Cather, John Steinbeck, and Leslie Silko—critique of "hydraulic" dependence is best understood not so much as a discrete project but as part of a broader indictment of the abuse of land and smallholders by greed-driven entrepreneurs. As to whether some version of a bioregional ethic can effectively combat this, I'm unsure. I'd like to think so, and I share Worster's admiration for J.W. Powell's bold prescription for development of the arid land of the West within the limits of its fluvial geography—a prescription promptly ignored.

Quite apart from the question of whether further such appeals to local rootedness will have traction, except as activators of nostalgic environmental memory, one must also reckon with how readily such appeals can cater to xenophobia, sectionalism, and the lure of cultural homogeneity. Bioregionalism, I fear, tends too readily to presuppose a benign and earth-friendly local populace—a settler culture version of the ecological Indian stereotype. Recent arguments for bioregionalism have sought to correct against this hazard, and rightly so, by conceiving urban districts as parts of bioregions and by pointing out the cultural heterogeneity of actual bioregional populations—but without fully exorcising the image of the interdependent, homogeneous, and small hinterland community as the model of a socio-environmental utopia.

CM: A large percentage of American rivers have been dammed, diverted, or 'straightjacketed.' They now flow between human-made banks; their channelization has led to changes in the hydrological cycle, the balance of species, and the destruction of ecosystems.

Environmentalists are today fighting for the 'renaturalization' and 'freeing of rivers.' They see agency in nature. After all, rivers are active and dynamic; they 'flow' and they 'work.' Obviously these are human constructs, and yet I wonder: Is nature political? To what extent can it embody a kind of political agency?

LB: To argue from environmental theory to the politics of nature is tempting but tricky. In the US, if not elsewhere, I predict that de-damming will continue to make much better headway, chiefly for practical environmental and economic reasons, than will arguments for the legal agency or standing of natural systems, especially in the US where the Supreme Court is packed with conservatives for the foreseeable future. In the developing world, of course—India, China, and Africa—we'll likely see a continued push for more gargantuan hydropower projects for some time to come.

CM: Historian Richard White has claimed that the call for a return to nature is nothing but a religious ritual. It would be an illusion to assume that restoration leads to purity. Sins, he says, do not go away because "history does not go away." Is there hope? If not in religion, in language? In something else?

LB: Claims that nature is sacred space must be put in context. Some bespeak serious faith commitments, others more pragmatic advocacy for nature protection, still others little more than rhetorical flourish. Without going all the way with those who seriously think of themselves as worshiping in the church of the woods, I'd argue that passionate conviction about the preservation of undeveloped, sizeable tracts of reasonably accessible open space is an absolute value for humans, as well as for environmental well-being, and is entirely defensible as an environmental philosophy and social policy. It is a potentially powerful basis for establishing broader appeal, and is not to be written off as captious purism. Let me add that Richard White's dismissal of back-to-naturism as pious mumbo jumbo strikes me as at least partly provocative hyperbole, a kind of counterpoint, as it were, to casting himself elsewhere in *The Organic Machine* as a starstruck observer of the romance of hydro-modernization.

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CM: Should we read riverscapes and watersheds as texts? It seems that an analysis of the physical world exposes connections between geography, memory, landscape, and social relationships. Is there a fundamental difference between reading texts and reading riverine landscapes?

LB: Both types of reading involve interpretative acts, of course. but it won't do to conflate, for example, acts of vicarious engagement with represented, perhaps suppositious, landscapes (as literary-critical work) with acts arising from engagement with actual spaces and sites. Where the distinctions get more complicated and interesting, however, are middle-ground cases like maps of known places constructed from memory.

CM: In 2011, the Provincial Court of Loja, Ecuador, granted a Constitutional injunction in favor of a river, the Vilcabamba River, against the Provincial Government of Loja. The case was made in drawing on the indigenous idea of "derechos de la naturaleza" (rights of nature). The widening of a road, the court argued, had violated "the rights of the river." It had increased the river flow and potentially provoked disasters for the vulnerable riverside populations who utilize the river's resources. Some critics would argue that the most powerful—and subversive—ideas that can help rescue endangered environments around the globe (such as the Rights of Nature or the Gross National Happiness Index) are today coming from indigenous understandings. How capable is our culture of incorporating ideas from the global periphery that come with a more subjective evaluation of emotional health and cultural and ecological vitality?

LB: Perhaps the best way to work toward a response to this question is along the lines of the traditional emic/etic distinction in cultural anthropology. Cultural insiders and cultural outsiders both have something to bring to the table, but not the same something. Some sort of cross-pollination of perspectives is needed both for indigeneity to survive in today's world and for the western ecocultural imagination to achieve the granularity needed to avoid entrapment in loops of profitless speculation.

CM: And to what extent, do you think, can the western cultural imagination suggest an emotionally sensitive and politically powerful way of thinking across nature-culture divides?

LB: Successful cross-pollination of perspectives surely requires substantial actual contact and interaction above and beyond communication from a distance, doing one's homework, etc. Maybe a term of situated fieldwork should become a required part of every future environmental humanist's training.

CM: Currently, US politicians and citizens concerned about global warming are advocating for a Green New Deal. They are hitting a wall in their communication with large parts of the public, not least because many contemporaries have more urgent worries than climate change. After all, the climate's footprint isn't easily detectable in our everyday surroundings. Can imaginative literature about rivers be a call to arms or do we need to be essayistic, journalistic, and nonfictional if we want to move electors and bring about political change?

LB: The power of story, image, and metaphor to rivet attention and instigate change can surely be formidable, as Rachel Carson, for one, proved in *Silent Spring*. I don't think it follows, however, that creative writers or environmental humanists should feel obliged to turn their favored genres of practice into calls to arms, or self-transform into public intellectuals, unless they feel a vocation for it. To state this another way, inquiry and activism are quite different pursuits, requiring different talents and proclivities, which may or may not coexist in the same person, and if they do coexist, they may do so either in mutual reinforcement or in competition with one another, or both. The place in one's head where ideas germinate often is not the same place where one plans one's activism, which in my case has been more through pedagogy and volunteer work outside the cloister. That said, I doubt that environmental writers and creative writers are likely to accomplish anything worthwhile without also being committed environmentalists and, furthermore, convinced of the potential importance of their critical or creative insights to the wider world, whether or not they take it upon themselves to engage in direct activism or advocacy.

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CM: You have emphasized in your writings that "watershed consciousness" is a much-needed and effective force in triggering ecological thinking and advocacy. How can we create images, ideas, and understandings that will reach into the minds of ordinary people and not just those who are already environmentally conscious? And who do you see as the leading allies and stewards of rivers and watersheds—today and into the future?

LB: One way would surely be through more proactive mass media-circulating images and infomercials with easy-to-read visuals (a mixture of maps, photos, and info-bits) that dramatize and begin to explain such basics as (1) "everyone" (in the first instance the viewer) lives in a watershed; (2) "*Here* is *your* watershed;" (3) Here are some of the ways (shown by the map) in which your life depends on the health of the watershed and vice-versa, etc. I'm sure that some environmental NGOs and individual environmentalists have been experimenting with such forms of media pedagogy, and I feel sheepish that I myself have not kept up on this scene. Be that as it may, here I think is an opportunity for closer partnerships between academic environmentalism and the wider realms of popular media, especially if one's university or research center has a good media lab or working group in environmental media studies.

Clearly international NGOs and local advocacy groups need each other. Neither is sufficient alone. Hope for the future lies in their collaboration.

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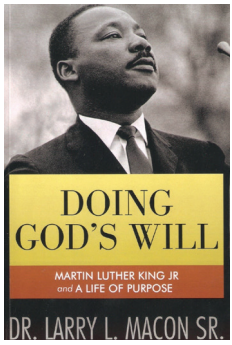
DOING GOD'S WILL: MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. AND THE LIFE OF PURPOSE

by Larry L. Macon Sr.
(A Book Review)



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Even though racism has been recognized as wrong (sadly, not that long ago), the world, heedless, is heading towards nationalism and radical conservatism again. It certainly is a reason for concern, especially that the semantics of such adjectives as "patriotic," "religious," and "nationalist" seem to blur, and in the ensuing ideological and terminological chaos, extreme attitudes adopted with respect to these lofty notions have already proven to aggravate, rather than mitigate, social tensions. To Larry L. Macon, Sr., a theologian, questions concerning the essence of Christian ethics are of elementary importance in this context. Can faith matter in the process of social change? Can Christians have a positive impact on the social life of the multicultural and multiethnic societies in which they live? Can they truly overcome evil with good? And if so, what theology might provide a fundament solid enough to eliminate partisanship within Christianity and effectively translate the essential Christian creed into social practice?

In his *Doing God's Will*, Larry L. Macon seeks to answer these questions by shedding light upon the theology of one of the most influential pastors in history: an African American Southerner,

Nobel Peace Prize winner, and legendary Civil Rights leader—Martin Luther King Jr. Unlike many other biographers, however, the author of the book—a minister and a professor of religion at Cleveland State University in Ohio—depicts King not only as a Civil Rights champion, but also as a son and grandson of ministers, as a child of African Americans who fought for justice, and as a legacy-bearer of Africa. Furthermore, perhaps because Macon—a scholar of Native American extraction—is neither African American nor white, the image of Martin Luther King he paints is not tinged with any black-white tension. The above notwithstanding, as a Native American intellectual, Macon demonstrates a particular sensitivity to issues of racial mistreatment, which allows him not only to empathize with the trauma of the African American experience, but also to appreciate, without bias, the unique connection between King's theology and his formula of social and political activism.

This, possibly, is one of the reasons why the book creates the impression that it exceeds the limits of its genre. Although it does offer the reader a plethora of historical facts in rich contexts, the narrative chiefly aims at bringing into light the complexity of connections between Martin Luther King's theology, his background, and the philosophy of the African American Church. Macon invites his readers "to a journey" through the famous minister's life, allowing the sensitive "pilgrim" to develop a profound, emotionally sound, understanding of what it meant to be African American both during and before King's lifetime, and how important religious faith was in the context of the African American reality of the time (Macon 2019: 15). The author thus guides his readers through his protagonist's childhood, offering the audience an insight into experiences to which young Martin was exposed while growing up as a son of a respected Ebenezer Baptist Church pastor and—at the same time—as an African American boy, learning his first bitter lessons in racism. Following a chronological key, Macon then presents King in the turbulent contexts of his teenage and college years, and ultimately arrives at the final stage of his protagonist's intellectual and moral formation, showing him as the ethically, socially, and politically self-aware, charismatic leader of the Civil Rights Movement.

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Importantly, however, the author uses the biographical formula to address Martin Luther King's evolution towards ministry—a process in the course of which his stewardship to the African American Church became tantamount to his committment to his nation's brighter future.

The uniqueness of the books lies in the fact that its author placed special emphasis on the explanation of essence of the cultural importance of the Black Church in the USA. Like Macon, many scholars believe that it was the Black Church and the Black ministers who exerted a crucial impact upon King's activism, arguing that in order to comprehend the leader's mission, it is vital to understand the fundamentals of his religion and the expressive formula of worship characterizing his church (Clayborne et al. 1991: 90–99). Macon reminds his readers that the Black Church has evolved from the Slave Religion and thereby, indirectly, remains rooted in Traditional African Religions, professed by men and women who were captured and brought to the Americans shores as enslaved people. His thorough explanation brings the readers' attention to the fact that the myth of 'Universal Christianity,' an idea often used to control and subdue people in bondage, has always had little substance: the notion of God shared by enslaved people differed significantly from the concept shared by their white owners. Quite predictably, despite the massive social, political, and economic transformation that America underwent between the Emancipation Proclamation and the present day, important differences in white and black perceptions of God remain. The experiences of white Americans and African Americans were different in the past—and, sadly, they remain different now, which is why, as Macon explains, "[t]he Black Church is not the same, nor is it a replication of the White Church. They are culturally, contextually, and historically different and distinct" (Macon 2019: 110). In his interpretation of the provenance of these distinctions, Macon supports C. Eric Lincoln's view, who believes that as long as white Americans trace their religious roots back to Western Europe, the African Americans can boldly claim their religious roots to be in Africa, not North America (Lincoln 1974:1).[1]

1. See also Macon 2019:111.

The above notwithstanding, as Macon points out, Black and white churches (whether Protestant or Catholic) do, of course, have a lot in common, but it is important to remember that although the present-day Black Church may be analyzed in the evolutionary context of the American Christianity at large, it developed as a formation parallel to white Christianity, originating in gathering on plantations, unsupervised by white masters, led by intrepid Black leaders, and—as has been mentioned—drawing from African Traditional Religions (ATR). In his discussion of ATR, Macon refers to Peter J. Paris's work *Spirituality of African Peoples* (1995), in which the scholar pays special attention to the fact that, both historically and today, the distinction between the sacred and the secular is inessential in the Africans' everyday life. Drawing upon the features he identified as common across a wide range of African forms of worship, Paris generalizes that in most African stories of origin, the Divine Being created the world, rules it, and helps the community to meet its needs. Genderless, the Divine Being has their own will, according to which S/He acts. S/He has helpers—lesser supernatural beings, or sub-divinities. S/He is an invisible and self-sustaining spirit, which is why no visual representations of the Supreme Being have come into existence in the in ATR. Such a Being is conceived of as God who has no end, is all-powerful, unchangeable, perfect, omnipresent, omnipotent, wise, good, and possesses unlimited knowledge. Unreachable to humans, God is always close to mankind created in an act of love. A just Judge who punishes the evil and rewards the good, a Supreme Being of the African Traditional Religions bears a number of features parallel to those attributed to God in Christianity.

For this reason, as Macon observes, at the level of the religious discourse, the adoption of Christianity could have been relatively easy for the Africans professing traditional religions. In both cultural contexts God is a Spirit, and thus the Christian belief in an invisible God or Holy Spirit, or Jesus Christ as one of God's incarnations (who could be conceived of as a sub-divinity) may not have been contrary to their traditional beliefs. However, because the Christianization of the enslaved Africans would often be effected by the whip in the hand of the oppressor who would not shun from using Scriptures to justify their practices, and because within churches

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racial segregation was a fact of life, the distinct elements of African religions and cultures brought to America with the captured ones were retained in African American spirituality. Macon observes that some traditional religious values that endured the dark period of slavery and segregation can now be found in the theological substratum of the contemporary Black Church.

It is against such a background that Macon locates King, who himself was a member of Black Baptist communities. Black Baptist Church became dissociated from the white Baptist Church (from which it originally derives) due to the schism caused by racial exclusion. As independent institution, it promoted spiritual freedom and emotive worship, which went hand in hand with the character of the ATR-rooted African American spirituality. Martin Luther King's early texts, written during his college and university years, reveal a lot about his personal attitude to the Black Baptist Church. Notwithstanding the accusations of plagiarism, Macon asserts, these writings pinpoint one important issue: King struggled with theological doubts concerning the Black Church's philosophical fundaments and practice, yet, in the midst of the doubts, he could never turn away from the morality and ethics he had learned in it (Clayborne et al. 1991: 90–99). Initially opposed to the vision of becoming a minister, King understood well that the Black Church can be a center for social activism, a *locus* where the African American community could be galvanized into action (Clayborne et al. 1991: 96).

As Mason emphasizes, Martin Luther King adopted personalism, which partially stems from the tradition of the African American Church, as the philosphical substratum of his definition of God. According to Rufus Burrow, personalism is an ideology that "has profound implications for the way we think about God, nature, animal life, evil and suffering, freedom, ethics, and a host of other things relevant to human and other life forms" (Burrow 2006: 7, 12). To King, Burrow claims, the most important aspect of personalism was the belief in "the existence of a personal God, the dignity and sacredness of all persons, the existence of an objective moral order and corresponding moral laws, freedom, and moral agency" (Burrow 1999: 10–11), which allows the scholar to conclude that personalism had been culturally transmitted to, and intellectually

instilled in King by the environment in which he had been growing up. Bearing in mind that some aspects of King's personalism, such as his belief that God is personal and that humans are holy, can be traced back to the traditional African worldview (Burrow 1999: xiii, 1, 77; Burrow 2006: 6), it stands to reason to argue that King's theology was an outcome of the dynamics of his cultural legacy and his academic education. In 1960, King—already the leader of the Civil Rights Movement—declared thus:

> In recent months I have also become more and more convinced of the reality of a personal God. True, I have always believed in the personality of God. but in past years the idea of a personal God was little more than a metaphysical category which I found theologically and philosophically satisfying. Now it is a living reality that has been validated in the experiences of everyday life. Perhaps the suffering, frustration and agonizing moments which I have had to undergo occasionally as a result of my involvement in a difficult struggle have drawn me closer to God. Whatever the cause, God has been profoundly real to me in recent months. In the midst of outer dangers I have felt an inner calm and known resources of strength that only God could give [...] I am convinced that the universe is under the control of a loving purpose and that in the struggle for righteousness man has cosmic companionship. (King 2013: 73)

Next to personalism, another important aspect of King's worldview traceable back to his African American legacy is manifest in his doctrine of the political engagement of the Church, which could be interpreted as a version of the concept of the non-divisibility of the sacred and the profane in everyday practice, characteristic of the ATR. Macon points it out by indicating the role which the Black Church has played in the sociopolitical reality of African Americans' lives. Given that the Church brought together individuals treated as 3/5 humans, the need for a very tangible delivery from oppression has always been present among its members. Always politically sensitive, the Black Church contributed to the expansion of freedom-oriented theologies and thereby also to the liberation of the enslaved Africans in 1863 by virtue of President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. However, despite the abolition of slavery, racial injustice continued to be supported by law, the Black Codes or the Jim Crow laws serving as the most well-known examples. The Church reacted to such attempts to legalize racism by developing equality-oriented the-

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ologies, whose proponents, including Martin Luther King, made a very significant contribution to the change of the political climate in the United States, and ultimately—to the validation of the Civil Rights Act, as well as to the passing of the Voting Rights Bill. One of such theological propositions was based on Luke 4:18–19, interpreting whom the Black Church developed what has come to be known as Social Theology:

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
> for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor.
> He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released,
> that the blind will see,
> that the oppressed will be set free,
> and that the time of the Lord's favor has come[2]

Social Theology aimed at freeing the souls and improving social conditions of their bearers by political and social means. Martin Luther King adopted its provisions, believing that it is the institution of the Church that should be revolutionary and that it is its duty to fight evil in the society (Rathbun 1968: 46–50). The Church, in his view, should avoid using prayer as an excuse for passivity and silence: action and prayer should go together. Furthermore, because King believed that discriminatory laws passed by groups wielding power to protect the stability of their position at the cost of the suffering of countless others, they must be disobeyed: social actions should be judged as good or bad based on universal moral laws.

King's formula of non-militant civil disobedience, in which moral and social philosophy inform one another, offered him a compelling argument to challenge many Baptist churches to actively address social injustice. Some, as Macon observes, proved reluctant. Others, on the other hand, adopted the central premises of King's theology, which lead to the establishment of the Progressive National Baptist Convention that promoted social justice and encouraged churches to support both political and civil agendas that aimed at warranting marginalized groups in America their full civil rights. King believed that the Church should be involved in politics to fight evil manifest in systematic

2. The quotation comes from the New Living Translation of the Bible.

discrimination, affecting employment, housing conditions, legal procedures of incarceration and police brutality, and many other aspects of everyday life. Should it remain passive, the Church would support the status quo, thereby, contrary to its mission, supporting evil.

Merging personalism and social action ideology, King's theology rests upon the fundamental law of love, whose transforming power renders it an efficient instrument of social change (Rathbun 1968: 46–50). Its main premise, rooted in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:43–4), was the commandment to "Love your enemies," which became King's central motto:

> we must first develop and maintain a capacity to forgive; second, distinguish between the evil deeds of the enemy and the goodness that can be found in every individual; and third, seek to win the friendship and understanding of our enemies rather than defeating and humiliating them. (Henry 1987: 329)

The strategy allowing one to combine love with the struggle for justice and equality was that of non-violent resistance, to the application of which King was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. For King, Gandhi was perhaps the first individual in the world's history to implement Jesus' teaching on a vast scale in the sphere of politics (Henry 1987: 330). The success of non-violent resistance would be tantamount to King's dream to establish an integrated American society coming true. Hoping for the best, however, the famous minister would excercise a degree of caution in his actions:

> Even in his discussions of the Beloved Community, Martin Luther King sought to avoid "a superficial optimism," on the one hand, and "a crippling pessimism," on the other hand. While he avoided pointing to any existing political system as a model, it was clear that elements of the "American Dream" were firmly rooted in the Beloved Community. The universalism and inherent individual rights embodied in his nation's political tradition struck a responsive chord in King. Yet the Kingdom of Good—synonymous with the Beloved Community in King's thought—could not be limited to any one nation, language, race, or class. Ultimately, his vision was not rooted in the American Dream or in the goodness of white America, but rather in God. (Henry 1987: 329)

King's theologically-rooted non-partisanship may have earned him a prominent place on the list of "Twenty Most Influential

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Southerners of the Twentieth Century" (Reed 2001: 96–100), but, perhaps even more importantly, it was his emotional message of love—spread in a fashion characteristic of the evangelical practices of the Black Baptist tradition—that made him a legend. King found eager listeners both among African Americans and among the whites, who, fearing its militant alternative, would be inclined to support the non-violent Civil Rights Movement:

> Only a refusal to hate or kill can put an end to the chain of violence in the world and lead us toward a community where men can live together without fear. Our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives. (King 2013: 154)

The appeal of the idea of the Beloved Community, especially in the context of the escalation of racial conflicts at the time, proved powerful not only because it carried a promise of a better, peaceful future to people of all descents, but also because it was the divine, rather than human, authority that granted King's vision credibility among his Christian audiences:

> I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. but I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land. And I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. (King 2013: 239)

Doing God's Will portrays Martin Luther King as a 'practical theologian,' whose biblically sanctioned activism demonstrated to the world that "[e]pic changes can be made without carrying a gun."[3] Larry Macon's unique biography emphasizes the elusive, non-scientific factor of faith, which preconditions the social engagement of a believer who practices the values he preaches. It leads the reader to the conclusion that in order to comprehend the power of Martin Luther King's argumentation, it is necessary to take into account far more than his unquestionable rhetorical

3. "Martin Luther King's Legacy Still Touches Lives Today." *USA Today*, accessed April 18, 2021, https://search-1ebscohost-1com-1ognznvvc011e.han.bg.us.edu.pl/login.aspx?direct=true&db=f5h&AN=J0E284754014811&lang=pl&site=eds-live.

skills or the sociopolitical situation of at the time. His struggle in favor of the love-based society consisting of integrated communities regardless of differences and his fight against injustice appealed to millions not only because the conditions of life in post-war, segregated America became unbearable to the marginalized and dangerous to the majority, and not only because the alternative proposed by Malcolm X might push the country to the brink of yet another Civil War. Larry Macon convincingly demonstrates that perhaps more important than all other factors was the fact that Martin Luther King's theology proved to resonate with the African American spirituality to such an extent that his dream became the dream shared by countless Americans, whose faith allowed them to see the Civil Rights Movement and its charismatic leader as the fulfilment of the biblical promise of deliverance.

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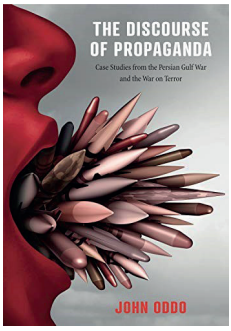
THE DISCOURSE OF PROPAGANDA: CASE STUDIES FROM THE PERSIAN GULF WAR AND THE WAR ON TERROR

by John Oddo
(A Book Review)



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We live in the times of fake news. It is present everywhere—in TV programs, periodicals, social media—and even in books categorized as non-fiction. Usually, however, with Internet access and instantaneous availability of many reliable online resources, it does not require a lot of time to fact-check and determine whether a given statement is true or false. It is only occassionally that it does take an expert to verify controversial issues on the basis of their own, or someone else's, meticulous research. And yet, because men and women of the 21st century are always busy working, taking care of the family, or relaxing, rarely ever are they willing to muster energy or make the time to check facts on their own. As a rule, an average addressee of the news is rather content to "suspend his or her disbelief" and to transfer the responsibility for the verification of information to professionals (who are trusted to possess the expertise in a given field), or to journalists (who are trusted to to check their facts before making them news). Moreover, given that audiences are partial to sensation, and that they are always keen to share dramatic information with others, it does not require any expert techniques or particular acting talents to make sure that alternative facts, once

publicized, will spread like wildfire—without any verification, without a shade of doubt.

The 2018 book by John Oddo titled *The Discourse of Propaganda: Case Studies from the Persian Gulf War and the War on Terror* offers a marvelous insight into the phenomenon in question. Written with a wide audience in mind, it could serve as a textbook for those without any prior knowledge or professional background in the area, who wish to broaden their horizons, as well as a valuable source of materials for academics specializing in the fields of political science, psychology, cultural studies, American-Middle Eastern relations, or linguistics. In his book, Oddo—whose areas of expertise are professional writing, rhetoric, global communication and applied translation—transcends disciplinary boundaries. As he claims:

> My research draws on theories of rhetoric, discourse, and multimodality to critically examine how powerful agents use language (and other symbols) to generate support for war. The focal point of my research is "intertextual rhetoric"—that is, rhetoric that operates across texts and across time. I am interested in how US political leaders reuse generic rhetorical techniques to manipulate the public and draw the country into hostilities. I also focus on the ways that media institutions recontextualize and modify the claims of political leaders during the run-up to war—often enhancing the "call-to-arms message."[1]

While his first book titled *Intertextuality and the 24-Hour News Cycle: A Day in the Rhetorical Life of Colin Powell's U.N. Address* (2014) examines how, and to what ends, the general's 2003 speech was reported by television news and newspapers, in *The Discourse of Propaganda* Oddo adopts a broader perspective and attempts to shed light upon how propaganda works in general, focusing on the traits of the manipulative discourse that effectively led to the outbreak of two tragic wars: the Persian Gulf War in 1990 and the "War on Terror," culminating in Operation Iraqi Freedom, in 2003.

The author opens his book with the the explanation of what propaganda is. Drawing on theories developed by various scholars, he seeks to compile the most accurate definition of the phenom-

1. See John Oddo's biographical note at https://www.cmu.edu/dietrich/english/about-us/faculty/bios/oddo-john.html (1 May 2021).

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enon. In his view, "a key feature of successful propaganda is that it propagates, reaching enormous numbers of people" (Oddo 2018: 37), who regard elites as authoritative, trusting in what they say. However, because messages generated by the authorities are very often shared among their end addressees, it is important to bear in mind that a successful propaganda strategy must account for the fact that the transmission of information can be both vertical (from the top to the bottom of hierarchy—e.g., from the president to journalists and, ultimately, to their audiences) and horizontal (between or among recipients).

This observation is particularly important especially in the context of the theory of proximization, upon which Oddo's argumentation concerning mechanisms of manupulation heavily relies. The proponent of the theory, Piotr Cap from the University of Łódź, Poland, defines "proximization" as "[…] a discursive strategy of presenting physically and temporally distant events and states of affairs (including 'distant' adversarial ideologies) as increasingly and negatively consequential to the speaker and her addressee." (Cap 2014: 17). It aims to induce—or aggravate—fear with respect someone or something and, as the name suggests, relies upon rhetorical devices that make (imagined or real) dangers seem *closer* to the recipient of the message than they are in reality. The perceived proximity of the danger renders it almost tangible, thus triggering emotional reactions in groups and individuals, who may then be inclined to trust the decisions of those designated to protect them, i.e. the political elites. The strategy of scaring masses into obedience—known and used since the times immemorial and perfected over centuries—was, as Oddo's book demonstrates, successfully deployed by the US authorities to intensify the fear of the Iraqi among the Americans at home. The mechanisms responsible for the success of the strategy in the context of both Iraqi wars are the focal point of the author's case studies.

The book is organized into seven sections: introduction, four parts, conclusion, and eleven appendices (A-K), containing transcripts of speeches, data sets, descriptions of methods, excerpts studied in the analytical sections, an overview of recurrent themes, and many other materials, potentially invaluable to scholars and scientists, who may wish to use them for analyses within

their own disciplines. Part 1 ("Defining Propaganda and Historicizing America's Wars in the Middle East) is further divided into two chapters: 1–"Theorizing Propaganda: Intertextuality, Manipulation, and Power," and 2–"The Persian Gulf War and the War on Terror: A Brief History." This section of the book provides readers with a theoretical background to propaganda and propaganda studies, and locates potential applications of theory in a practical context by relating it to discourses presented in a short, but eye-opening, overview of the two wars in Iraq. Sections that follow are subdivided into analytical chapters, each of which focuses on a separate case.

And so, in part 2, "Manufacturing an Atrocity," consisting of chapters "How the Incubator Story Became News: The Power of Performative Semiotics," and "Keeping War Fever Alive: The Circulation of the Incubator Story," the scholar employs the theoretical apparatus presented in the previous section to the analysis of the mechanisms of propaganda related to the infamous Kuwaiti provocation aimed to discredit the Iraqis. The eponymous "Manufactured atrocity" refers to the lie that Iraqi soldiers were guilty of disconnecting newborn babies from incubators and leaving them to die, which was officially propagated as a fact. The author analyzes how the story was circulated and how it was exploited by the US government and media to energize popular support for the war–which allows him a smooth transition into the discourse of Part 3, "Infiltrating Network News." Subdivided into chapters titled "Message Force Multipliers: Rewarding Recontextualization," "Enacting and Entextualizing the Voice of the Expert," and "The Evolution of a Talking Point," the section focuses on mechanisms of propaganda in the context of verified events and alt-facts that ultimately lead to the launch of the Operation Iraqi Freedom. Finally, Part 4, "The Art of Slogan," elaborates on how the US administration and the mass media at their disposal used the patriotic slogan "Support Our Troops" during the War on Terror to disqualify anyone critical of their actions as un-patriotic and un-American. Creating a binary divide between devout supporters of the US policy and "traitors," the US administration rhetorically eliminated any space for patriotic criticism in order to delegitimize opposing voices and to justify their own actions as ethical.

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In Conclusion, which collects the most important findings from analytical chapters and points out methodological limitations of the theories employed to explain the central concept of the book, John Oddo offers his readers some predictions for the future and a set of practical guidelines as to how an individual may identify propaganda and how he or she may resist manipulation. Most importantly, however, his findings allow the author to substantiate his claim that:

> propaganda is an intertextual process that requires contributions from multiple agents. It can succeed in circulating only if it continually induces new audiences to recognize and recontextualize it on a mass scale. Importantly, the people who create and recontextualize propaganda exist in democracies as well as autocracies. They may be elite actors or ordinary people, powerful agents or "unwitting accomplices" who keep the propaganda alive (4).

The *sine-qua-non* condition of the success of propaganda (a condition certainly met in the case of the phenomena discussed in the analytical chapters of the book) is that *everyone* should become engaged in the process of circulation of a lie: presidents, government officials, journalists, news analysts, corporations, as well as ordinary people who use Twitter, read Facebook, post content on Instagram, or simply talk with each other. Propaganda, as the cover-art of the book clearly suggest, is a weapon: the word may prove as deadly as a missile, if its trajectory is professionally, and ruthlessly, managed.

Propaganda will presumably be with us forever. Its efficiency, however, ultimately depends on informed decisions of individuals, who may or may not decide to make an effort and check facts before they help propagate them. In the world of fake news and alt-facts we cannot afford to seek excuses that could relieve us of our duty of caution. Awareness may save lives: to forgo awareness is to support manipulative discourses that are responsible for human tragedies. John Oddo's book, opening paths for scholars and scientists to further his research in disciplines they represent, is simultaneously a very important attempt to open his non-academic readers' eyes and teach them the essentials of self-defense against manipulation. Thereby—it is also a gesture of immeasurable ethical value.

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ABSTRACTS
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Rivers of the Americas RIAS vol. 14, Spring–Summer, № 1/2021

Imagining Rivers:
The Aesthetics, History, and Politics of American Waterways.
A Conversation between Lawrence Buell and Christof Mauch

This contribution features a transatlantic conversation between Christof Mauch, environmental historian and Americanist from Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, and Lawrence Buell, literary scholar and 'pioneer' of ecocriticism from Harvard University. Buell's *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (1995) marked the first major attempt to understand the green tradition of environmental writing, nonfiction as well as fiction, beginning in colonial times and continuing into the present day. With Thoreau's *Walden* as a touchstone, this seminal book provided an account of the place of nature in the history of Western thought. Other highly acclaimed monographs include *Writing for an Endangered World* (2001), a book that brought industrialized and exurban landscapes into conversation with one other, and *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (2009), which provides a critical survey of the ecocritical movement since the 1970s, with an eye to the future of the discipline.

Keywords: American rivers, literature, environmental criticism, ecocriricism, aesthetics

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STÉPHANE CASTONGUAY AND HUBERT SAMSON
Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, Canada
and
Groupe DDM, Quebec City, Canada

Atikamekw and Euro-Canadian Territorialities around the Saint-Maurice River (1850–1930)

This essay focuses on the processes of territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization through which Euro-Canadian society extended its control along the valley of the St. Maurice River between 1850 and 1930. That territory had been settled by the Atikamekw people where they had established their hunting and fishing grounds for centuries. However, the Atikamekw people were confronted by environmental and technological transformations around the St. Maurice River with the implementation of sociotechnical systems during that time period, as two successive phases of industrialization based on specific water use brought along a proliferation of urban centers and the arrival of the large-scale industry. This was particularly the case when the proliferation of hydroelectric dams along the St. Maurice River and its tributaries followed the construction of fluvial infrastructure to facilitate the floating of wood pulp harvested in the upper basin of the river. Not only did the technical activities surrounding the construction of hydroelectric facilities materially transform the St. Maurice River watershed, they also allowed a symbolic appropriation of the land by the production of maps and surveys that 'erased' the presence of the Atikamekw. Physical and symbolic boundaries resulting from these new forms of organiza-

tion and configuration of the territory restricted the spatial practices and representations of the Atikamekw. Logging confined these people within isolated enclaves (the so-called "Indian reserves"), while dams bypassed their networks of exchange and communication. The aim of this essay is to understand the conflicts between the territorialities of the Atikamekw and that of the Euro-Canadians by focusing on the place of water uses within the geographical imaginations and the land use patterns of these populations.

Keywords: Canada, Saint-Maurice River, Atikamekw, territory, watershed, industrialization

Stéphane Castonguay is Professor of history at the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières. He coedited *Metropolitan Natures* (2011) with Michèle Dagenais, and *Urban Rivers* (2012) with Matthew Evenden, both in the History of the Urban Environment series from the University of Pittsburgh Press. His most recent book, *The Government of Natural Resources. Science, Territory and State Power in Quebec, 1867–1939* (UBC Press, 2021), deals with the historical geography of state formation and natural resource exploitation.

Hubert Samson is currently employed at Groupe DDM. While studying at the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (UQTR), he developed a special interest in environmental issues. Under the supervision of Professor Stéphane Castonguay, he completed his master's degree at UQTR with a thesis focusing on the industrial transformation of the St-Maurice valley between 1900 and 1930. He has worked on the territorial relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples as well as the socio-environmental repercussions of industrialization in the lands of the Haute-Mauricie Atikamekw communities.

TRICIA CUSACK
Ireland

The Chosen People: The Hudson River School and the Construction of American Identity

This text considers nineteenth-century riverscapes of the Hudson in relation to the formation of American identity. It argues that riverscapes in the United States contributed to welding a national identity to a Christian one, although officially the identities were distinct. I examine the role of the Hudson River School in the creation of the 'wilderness' as an image of American homeland, and how this construct incorporated the iconic figure of the Euro-American Christian 'pilgrim-pioneer.' America looked more to the future than to the past for its national narrative, and an orientation to the future was symbolized in art by the flow of the Hudson toward distant horizons, while the pioneer identity was extended to embrace the entrepreneur--developer. The pioneer has remained an iconic figure for American nationalism, but is now more firmly located in the nation's past; Janus's

gaze has been adjusted, demonstrating the potentially fluid character of nationalist discourse.

Keywords: painting, the Hudson River School, American Identity, Christian identity, pilgrim-pioneer, fluidity, nationalist discourse

Tricia Cusack has taught at the Open University, Cardiff Metropolitan University and the University of Birmingham. Her research focuses on how visual art in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries embodies ideas about national and cultural identities. Books include *Riverscapes and National Identities* (Syracuse, N.Y., 2019) and three edited volumes: *Framing the Ocean, 1700 to the Present: Envisaging the Sea as Social Space* (Abingdon, 2016); *Art and Identity at the Water's Edge* (Abingdon, 2016); and *Art, Nation and Gender: Ethnic Landscapes, Myths and Mother-Figures* (Abingdon, 2018), co-edited with Síghle Bhreathnach-Lynch. She has published articles in diverse journals including *Art History*; *Nations and Nationalism*; *National Identities*; *New Formations*; *Irish Review*; *Journal of Tourism History; Nineteenth Century Studies*; and the *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*. Tricia's forthcoming book, *The Reading Figure in Irish Art in the Long Nineteenth Century* will be published by Anthem Press in 2021.

MANLIO DELLA MARCA
Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (LMU), Germany
Guest Editor

Manlio Della Marca is an Assistant Professor of American Literature at LMU Munich and holds a Ph.D. in English-language literatures from the "Sapienza" University of Rome. Before joining LMU's Department of English and America Studies, he was a Doctoral Fellow at the International Forum for US Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (2010) and a BAA Research Fellow at the Eva Hesse Archive of Modernism and Literary Translation in Munich (autumn 2013). In 2014, he was awarded a DAAD postdoctoral fellowship for his project on the unpublished correspondence of Ezra Pound with the media theorist Marshall McLuhan and Eva Hesse. His publications include essays on Ezra Pound, Edith Wharton, Thomas Pynchon, Philip K. Dick, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Leslie Marmon Silko. He is currently working on a book titled *Homo Legens: Modes and Moods of Reading*.

PAUL FORMISANO
University of South Dakota, USA

"First in Time, First in Right": Indigenous Self-Determination in the Colorado River Basin

This article adopts the premise "first in time, first in right" to bring Indigenous knowledge about the Colorado River Basin and the natural world more broadly out of the mainstream's obscurity to reposition these perspectives at the foreground of the region's water cultures. To initiate what is in essence a decolonization of Colorado River Basin

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water knowledge, I examine texts representing various tribal affiliations and genres to consider how their particular use of story engages the historic and ongoing environmental injustices they have faced and continue to negotiate in their fight to preserve their sacred lands, identity, and access to reliable, clean water. Such a decolonization occurs through these texts' use of narrative to work within and against the scientific and instrumental discourses and their respective genres that have traditionally constructed and dictated mainstream Colorado River knowledge and activity. My treatment of narrative within the Ten Tribes Partnership Tribal Water Study (2018) and the Grand Canyon Trust's "Voices of Grand Canyon" digital project (2020) sheds greater light on the essential relationships the Basin's nations and tribes have with the Colorado River. Through these counternarratives to the West's dominant water ideologies and cultures, the Basin's tribal nations draw attention to past and ongoing struggles to secure equitable water access while amplifying their resilience and determination that defines their calls for environmental justice.

Keywords: Colorado River, environmental justice, Indigenous studies, literary studies

Paul Formisano is Associate Professor and Director of Writing at the University of South Dakota. His teaching and research in the environmental humanities brings together literary and rhetorical studies to address the complex, interdisciplinary issues regarding Western water management. This focus is the subject of his manuscript *Tributary Voices: Literary and Rhetorical Explorations of the Colorado River*. He is also working on an anthology on the literature of dams. Dr. Formisano's research has appeared in various journals and collections including *The Journal of Ecocriticism*, *Landscapes: The Journal of the International Centre for Landscape and Language*, *Iperstoria*, *Western American Literature*, *Make Waves: Water in Contemporary Literature and Film*, and *Reading Aridity in Western American Literature*.

ADRIAN TAYLOR KANE
Boise State University, USA

Central American Rivers as Sites of Colonial Contestation

In the introduction to *Troubled Waters: Rivers in Latin American Imagination* (2013), Elizabeth Pettinaroli and Ana María Mutis have argued that rivers in Latin American literature constitute a "locus for the literary exploration of questions of power, identity, resistance, and discontent." This thesis would seem to be supported by the many works of testimonial and resistance literature that were written during and about the Central American civil wars of the 1970s and 1980s as a means of denouncing and resisting various forms of oppression. In the 2004 film *Innocent Voices*, directed by Luis Mandoki, Mario Bencastro's 1997 story "Había una vez un río," and Claribel Alegría's 1983 poem "La mujer del Río Sumpul," the traumatic events in the protagonists' lives that occur in and near rivers create an inversion of the conventional use

of rivers as symbols of life, purity, innocence, and re-creation by associating them with violence, death, and destruction. At the same time, the river often becomes a metaphor for the wounds of trauma, which allude to the psychological suffering not only of the protagonists, but to the collective pain of their countries torn asunder by war. Arturo Arias's 2015 novel *El precio del consuelo* also features a river as the site of state-sponsored violence against rural citizens during the civil war period. In contrast with Bencastro's and Alegria's texts, however, Arias's novel highlights issues of environmental justice related to the use of rivers in Central America that continue to plague the region to date. In the present essay, I argue that these works are compelling representations of the ways in which rivers have become sites of contestation between colonial and decolonial forces in Central America.

Keywords: rivers, Central America, Arturo Arias, Claribel Alegria, Mario Bencastro. Oscar Torres, *Voces incoentes*, Sumpul River

Adrian Taylor Kane is a Professor of Spanish at Boise State University. He is the author of *Central American Avant-Garde Narrative: Literary Innovation and Cultural Change* (Amherst: Cambria, 2014) and editor of *The Natural World in Latin American Literatures: Ecocritical Essays on Twentieth-Century Writings* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010). His areas of research include Central American literature and Latin American environmental literature. He holds a Ph.D. in Spanish from the University of California, Riverside.

UWE LÜBKEN
Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (LMU), Germany
Guest Editor

Uwe Lübken is professor of American history at Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Munich. He has held teaching and research positions at the universities of Cologne, Munich, Münster and at the German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C. His publications include a prize-winning book on the US perception of the National Socialist threat to Latin America and several edited volumes, special issues, and articles on (American) transnational history and the history of natural hazards and catastrophes. He has published a history of flooding of the Ohio River (2014) and co-edited volumes on urban fires (University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), the management of natural resources (Berghahn Books, 2014) and city-river relations (Pittsburgh University Press, 2016). His current work explores the intersections of mobilities and the environment.

T.S. MCMILLIN
Oberlin College, USA

"Strangers Still More Strange": The Meaning of Rivers Bedeviled

Steamboats transformed rivers in the nineteenth-century United States, providing what many people considered a kind of mastery over nature. In literature from the period, while most writers marveled at or exulted in that perceived mastery, some questioned the origins

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of the reputed conquest. Did it result from human ingenuity? divine inspiration? a deal with the devil? Amid all the fog, smoke, and other vapors associated with the steamboat, vivid stories, compelling dramas, and comic searches for meaning took shape, and no literary work captured the tension informing, uncertainty surrounding, and ramifications emerging from this instance of technological innovation as powerfully as *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* (1857). Herman Melville's last novel, *The Confidence-Man* explores the author's notion that "Books of fiction" can perhaps give readers more truth, "more reality, than real life can show." Literature, for Melville, was an opportunity to reconsider the nature of things and our means of understanding that nature. In *The Confidence-Man*, he presented readers with a different view of the Mississippi River and the curious vessels working its waters. The novel imagined The Devil himself to be on board the steamboat, imperiling the soul of America.

Keywords: Mississippi River, steamboat, Herman Melville, literature and interpretation

T.S. McMillin is the author of *The Meaning of Rivers: Flow & Reflection in American Literature* (University of Iowa Press, 2011) and *Our Preposterous Use of Literature: Emerson & the Nature of Reading* (University of Illinois Press, 2000). He has published numerous articles on the Transcendentalists, including ''Beauty Meets Beast: Emerson's English Traits,'' essays on Thoreau and Emerson in the MLA's "Approaches to Teaching" series, and "The Discipline of Abandonment: Emersonian Properties of Transdisciplinarity & the Nature of Method." Recent writings and photo-essays on the Los Angeles River have appeared in a variety of journals and collected volumes, and he is at present completing a digital book on the river.

EUNICE NODARI AND MARCOS GERHARDT
Federal University of Santa Catarina, UFSC, Brazil
and University of Passo Fundo, UPF, Brazil

The Uruguay River: A Permeable Border in South America

The Uruguay River basin in South America has held a social, cultural, environmental, and economic relevance for many centuries. The river flows for about two-thousand kilometers, linked to an important remnant of native forest, the Selva Misionera in Argentina, and to a Brazilian conservation unit for biodiversity, the Turvo State Park. The Uruguay River is fed by several other important rivers, forming a basin region in which thousands of people live and work. The history of the Uruguay River is intensively linked to the permeable borders between Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay where different social groups circulated in diverse historical time periods. Forests along the river played a very important role with emphasis on the extraction and trade of yerba mate (*Ilex paraguariensis*, Saint-Hilaire), a forest product widely consumed in southern America, and also the timber extraction from native forests, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As a result, a profound socio-environmental

transformation took place with the reconstruction of regional landscapes shaped by the Uruguay River basin.

Keywords: biodiversity, forests, Uruguay River, parks, landscapes

Eunice Nodari holds a master's degree in European history from the University of California at Davis, and PhD in history at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. She is a full professor at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Brazil, where she develops teaching, research and advising students in the Graduate Programs of History and Interdisciplinary Humanities. She was a visiting researcher at the Center for Spatial and Textual Analysis at Stanford University (2015–2016) and a Fellow Researcher at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (2019–2020). Since 2010 she has been a fellow researcher in productivity at the National Research Council, Brazil. She is the coordinator of the Laboratory of Immigration, Migration and Environmental History (www.labimha.ufsc.br). She has published in specialized journals, edited collections, book chapters, and book monographs on nature and society in southern Brazil and Argentina. Her main research interests are in global environmental history, migration studies, forest and biodiversity and environmental disasters.

Marcos Gerhardt (http://gerhardt.pro.br) holds a master's degree in History from the Universidade Estadual de Londrina, Brazil and PhD in History at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Brazil. Currently, he is an associate professor and researcher at History Graduate Program in the Universidade de Passo Fundo, Brazil, and a member of the Laboratory of Immigration, Migration and Environmental History (www.labimha.ufsc.br). He has teaching experience and publications in history, with emphasis on environmental history, forest conservation and migration

DOROTHY ZEISLER-VRALSTED
Eastern Washington University, USA

Working Lives on the Mississippi and Volga Rivers Nineteenth-Century Perspectives

Throughout the nineteenth century, major rivers assumed multiple roles for emergent nation-states of the western world. The Thames in England, the Seine in France, and the Rhine in Germany all helped to fuel a growing sense of national identity. Offering a sense of unity and uniqueness, these rivers were enlisted by poets, artists, and writers to celebrate their country's strengths and aesthetic appeal. The Mississippi and Volga Rivers were no exceptions to this riverine evolution. At the same time, however, less vocal populations experienced the rivers differently. To African Americans—enslaved and free—laboring on the Mississippi offered a freedom of movement unknown to the land-bound. While employed on steamships, African Americans escaped vigilant overseers and the possibility of escaping bondage. Still, the work

was demanding and relentless. To the burlaki, the Volga was taskmaster and nurturer. For both groups, laboring on the rivers resulted in connections that were immediate, intimate, exacting, often tedious and brutal, concomitant with marginalized lives, consigned to society's fringe. Still, the lives shaped by working on these rivers, produced rich cultures revealing alternative riverine histories. In these histories, the rivers possessed an agency, enshrining the ambiguity of the human relationship with the environment; a complexity often missing in the national narratives.

Keywords: rivers, labor, race, barge hauler, African American

Dorothy Zeisler-Vralsted is Professor Emeritus of International Affairs at Eastern Washington University where she taught classes on modernization and nature, the contemporary politics of water, and modernization and Indigenous peoples. A recipient of two Fulbright awards, her research focuses on water history with publications on the historical development of major river systems, water use in the American West, and the intersection of race, gender and the environment. Her most recent publication is *Rivers, Memory and Nation- Building: A History of the Volga and Mississippi Rivers* (Berghahn Books, 2014). Her research has led to invited lectures in Australia, Armenia, Russia, United Arab Emirates and the US. She is currently under contract for two future publications, *African Americans and the Mississippi River: Race, History and the Environment* and an anthology of primary and secondary sources on water and human societies.

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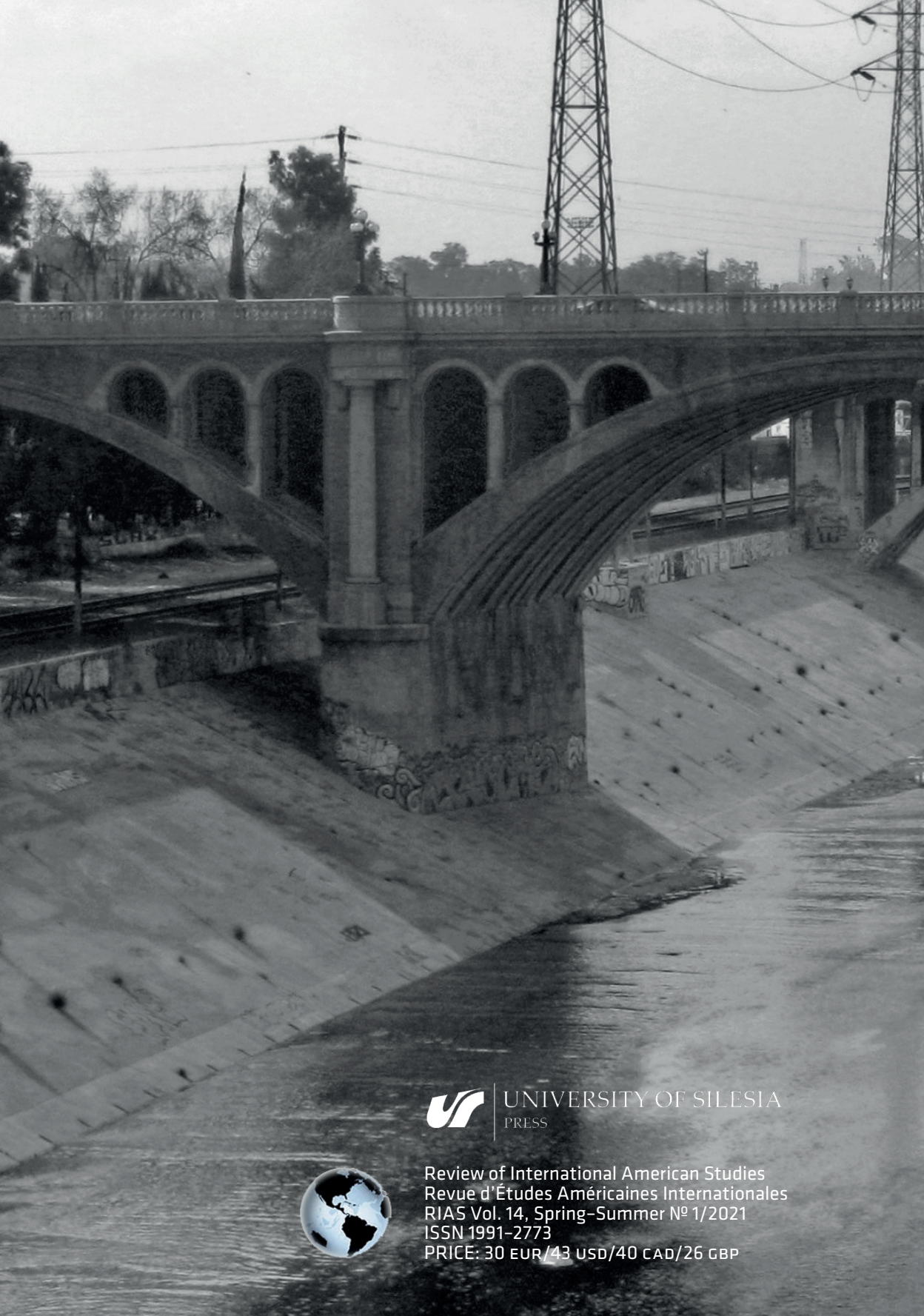
The article "The Fires Were Lit Inside Them: The Pyropolitics of Water Protector Camps at Standing Rock" by Elizabeth Hoover, published in the Spring/Summer issue of Volume 12 of RIAS is regretfully missing a citation. Much of the history of the NoDAPL movement on pages 18–19 was drawn from a presentation compiled by Jennifer Weston, a Standing Rock Sioux Tribal member, educator, and language advocate who has been working tirelessly to inform the public about the Standing Rock Dakota Access Pipeline Opposition movement.



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