

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: ANXIOUS JOURNEYS: PAST, PRESENT,
AND CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY IN
AMERICAN TRAVEL WRITING

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Travel writing ostensibly narrates leisurely excursions through memorable landscapes and records the adventures associated with discovering new scenes. The journey presumably provides an escape from the burdens of daily life, and the ideal traveler embraces the differences between home and another place. Yet, the path can sometimes lead to distressing scenes, where visitors struggle to situate themselves in strange and unfamiliar places. Americans, in particular, often demonstrate anxiety about what sites they should visit and how such scenes should be interpreted. The differences between their ideas about these spaces and the reality can also foment anguish. More, American travelers seem to believe that personal and national identities are tenuous, and they often take steps to preserve their sense of self when they feel threatened by uncanny sites and scenes. Thus, their travel narratives reveal a distinct struggle with what is here identified as the anxiety of travel. This dissertation identifies its triggers, analyzes its symptoms, and examines how it operates in American-authored narratives of travel.

While most critics divide these journeys into two groups (home and abroad), this dissertation considers tension in both domestic and transatlantic tours. This broader approach provides a more thorough understanding of the travel writing genre, offers more information on how this anxiety functions, and helps us to formulate a more specific theory about the roles of anxiety and travel in identity construction. It also invites a reassessment of destination and what constitutes a site, and makes it easier to recognize disguised anxiety. The first chapter examines Willa Cather's articles from her 1902 journey to England and France, and is especially concerned with Cather's anxiety over history, culture, *other* women, and the prospect of interpreting travel itself. The second chapter explores Theodore Dreiser's *A Hoosier Holiday* as a dual text that reveals both Dreiser's impressions of 1915 America and his nostalgic desire to recover his lost boyhood. The third chapter analyzes Henry James's subject position as a tourist in *The American Scene*, tracks his touristic gaze, and studies his approach to tourism, both in Europe and in his natal land.

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IDENTITY IN AMERICAN TRAVEL WRITING

By

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Introduction

The Anxiety of Travel

When Theodore Dreiser and Franklin Booth planned their 1915 trip from New York to Indiana, Dreiser voiced concern over how their route would affect his ability to write distinctively not just about the journey, but about the road itself and the sights along the way. Although the main-traveled roads through central New York offered the most convenient passageway, Dreiser wanted to avoid the beaten path. In his opinion, “there isn’t a thing you can say about the Hudson River or the central part of New York State that hasn’t been said a thousand times before” (*Hoosier* 21). He longed to discover new roads—and forge a new path to Indiana—and he convinced Booth to seek an alternative path to their destination. When Mark Twain toured Rome in 1867, he also worried about the possibility of seeing something new. He wanted to have an original encounter with the ancient city, but in *The Innocents Abroad* he expresses doubts about the likelihood of that happening: “What is there in Rome for me to see that others have not seen before me? What is there for me to touch that others have not touched? What is there for me to feel, to learn, to hear, to know, that shall thrill me before it pass to others? What can I discover?” (191-92). Disconcerted, he answers, “Nothing” (192). Although Twain’s anxiety appears to emerge from a desire to see an authentic, untouched Rome, his concerns, like Dreiser’s, may also be related to his intent to write about travel. Their shared apprehension is over what might happen if it becomes impossible “to make a book out of” the journey, as Dreiser once put it (*Hoosier* 21).

In his study of eighteenth-century European travel writers, Dennis Porter suggests that this nervousness emerges because the individual suffers from “a sense of

belatedness,” as if one has arrived too late to add anything significant to a particular site’s extant narratives (12). Struggling to “prove” his or her “self-worth,” according to Porter, the writer feels pressure to “add something new and recognizably” original “to the accumulated testimony” of one’s “predecessors” (12). Consequently, “to the anxiety of travel itself is added the anxiety of travel writing” (12). Porter claims that the problem may “be resolved by choosing to play the iconoclast rather than the rhapsodist, that is to say, by denigrating what others had praised” (12). Dreiser uses this technique in *A Traveler at Forty* when he argues that touring the ancient churches of Florence can become “a little wearisome, not to say brain-achey, when contemplated en masse” (338). In his opinion, churches like the Santa Maria Maggiore, with their “hodge-podge of history, wealth, illusion, and contention, to say nothing of religious and social discovery” are little more than “intricate jewel-boxes; nothing more” (338).¹

At the same time, this unease can be related to genre. The narrative styles and various techniques used by authors such as Dreiser, Mary Austin, and Henry James

¹ Henry James, in *Italian Hours*, offers a far more conventional portrait of the Santa Maria Maggiore. Calling it “one of the most delightful of churches,” James reports that, on his first trip there, he simply “sat for half an hour on the edge of the base of one of the marble columns of the beautiful nave and enjoyed the perfect revel of . . . taste, intelligence, fancy, perceptive emotion” (132). For James, the “place proved so endlessly suggestive that perception became a throbbing confusion of images” (132). This is the same site that gave Dreiser a headache, but James celebrates the richness of history and beauty in these sites, and he finds that the “deeper charm” of the church is its “social or historic note or tone or atmosphere,” the very same thing that Dreiser finds overwhelming (133). Both men also tour the Campo Santo, and the differences in their portrayals, while not as extreme, are nonetheless worth a glance. Dreiser finds that the Campo Santo is “the loveliest thing of its kind,” and he confesses that he did not realize that “graveyards were made, or could be made, into anything so impressively artistic” (*Traveler* 313). James observes that the “place is at once a cemetery and a museum, and its especial charm is its strange mixture of the active and the passive, of art and rest, of life and death” (*Italian* 276). James’s remarks indicate a deeper connection and perhaps a more sophisticated appreciation of the site. Dreiser, by contrast, seems more impressed with the cypress trees. He provides a brief description of the “marble arcade,” the outer and inner walls, and the “many delicate columns” of the Campo Santo, but then he turns his attention to the cypress trees and confesses that “wherever I saw them—one or many—I thrilled with delight” (313). While Dreiser does not disparage the Campo Santo, his fleeting attention to this sacred site, combined with the insinuation that the cypress tree moves him just as much—if not more—suggests a desire to challenge or even undermine traditional ways of seeing and touring Europe’s famed landmarks. By assuming the role of iconoclast, Dreiser begins to call into question the conventions of travel and forces others to consider their reasons for touring a particular space.

suggest the flexibility of the genre and indicate the range of choices available to travel writers. While Dreiser often uses fictional tropes to more fully portray his journey, Austin focuses on blending science and nature. She also aims to help future travelers obtain a more enriching experience, and she directs them to get “down to the eye level of rat and squirrel kind” because “man-height is the least fortunate of all heights from which to study trails” (*L L* 11). James eschews both of these methods and, instead, envisions himself as a “picture-maker” whose narrative is similar to an artist’s canvas (*American* 335). But this fluidity and seeming lack of rules can create concern over how one will modify the genre to most effectively relate the journey.² Will the account include elements of fiction such as dialogue and plot? Will the narrative voice be distanced through an omniscient narrator or made more personal by a first-person one? Should the retelling mimic a memoir or should it eliminate the traveler’s “I” altogether? The answers to these questions determine whether or not the account will conform to or challenge and broaden the genre itself.

While these theories offer a possible solution to the problem of writing about one’s journey in a fresh way, it does not address additional issues raised by Dreiser and Twain. Their apprehension also speaks to the perceived frailty of one’s identity—as a writer, as an individual, and as an American. The uneasiness that Dreiser and Twain write about is akin to what Harold Bloom understands as the poet’s “anxiety necessarily towards any danger that might *end him* as a poet” (58). Can the failure to write one’s

² In *The American Scene*, James confesses that it can be difficult to “render” certain aspects of American society and to accurately describe his own emotions during his tour (322, 334). In addition, he admits that when faced with determining what should and should not be included in his narrative, he experiences “a small sharp anguish” (311). For James, the “impressions” that he has gathered during his journey “have so hung together, have so almost equally contributed . . . to the total image . . . that to detach and reject is like mutilation or falsification” (311).

travels ultimately “end” the writer? Would Samuel Clemens be “Mark Twain” without *The Innocents Abroad*? The book did, after all, launch his career. He published *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County and Other Sketches* in 1867, but it was not until *The Innocents Abroad* that he found real success. For Dreiser, while *A Hoosier Holiday* was not one of his best sellers, it added to his canon and reasserted his credentials as a serious writer and observer of American culture. In this study, the relation between travel, anxiety, and identity is a primary concern, and the narratives analyzed here—Willa Cather’s articles from her 1902 tour of England and France, Theodore Dreiser’s *A Hoosier Holiday*, and Henry James’s *The American Scene*—are characterized by such fears. This study theorizes about the factors that trigger such trepidation, examines its symptoms, and investigates the struggle to preserve personal and national identity during travel. Obtaining a more thorough comprehension of this anxiety reveals that what once may have been considered ignorance and unsophistication may actually be a psychological response to fears associated with the perception that identity is fragile. This new way of understanding these texts yields a more productive approach to travel writing by Americans. It adds depth to the pool of texts deemed acceptable for study, and it provides a far more thorough and accurate presentation of the American traveler’s experience.

In addition to generating dismay over discovering something new in a well-known place and preserving one’s status as a writer, travel can also precipitate a crisis of personal and national identity. The term “identity” in this analysis refers to one’s psychological sense of self, to personal character traits, to a shaping ideological system, to personal history, and to the context of national history. Hélène Cixous claims that: “In

woman, personal history blends together with the history of all women, as well as of national and world history” (“Laugh” 882). In this study, identity is similarly understood as an amalgamation of the personal and national, past and present. It is the aggregate of an individual as a man or woman, as someone who is wealthy, underprivileged, or a part of the middle class, as a traditionalist or nonconformist, as a native or an immigrant, and so on. The act of traveling creates a heightened awareness of that identity. In his study of American travel writing from 1780-1910, Larzer Ziff explains that travel “separates the individual from the familiar surroundings that formed and sustain his sense of himself” (7). Consequently, “the traveler becomes radically aware of where he ends and all else begins; his individuality is, as it were, thrust upon him” (Ziff 7). This phenomenon represents the source of the American’s anxiety in travel. It accompanies Americans throughout their journeys, and they begin to perceive their identity as tenuous, as if it is somehow capable of being annihilated. Mark Twain discerns that vulnerability, and he counsels his fellow Americans to “take short visits to Europe” because such will “preserve us from becoming Europeanized; they keep our pride of country intact, and at the same time they intensify our affection for our country and our people” (*Tramp* 375). For Twain, extended stays in Europe threaten what he sees as a fragile American identity. Stay there too long, he warns, and you will become less American and more “Europeanized.” Your American pride will fade, and you will no longer be “American.”

Thus, just as Bloom’s poet fears his end, American travelers experience a similar strain. If they immerse themselves too much in another culture, they fear that they risk being separated from their sense of self and risk losing their secure “American” I. Theodore Dreiser, in *A Traveler at Forty*, demonstrates such anxiety. He affirms his

national allegiance when he begins to feel that he is wading too deep into England's cultural waters. He confesses the lure of "this Shakespearian-Wordworthian-Hardyesque world" and then abruptly announces that he is "not English but radically American" (38). Against a backdrop of European otherness, Dreiser takes steps to preserve his "I" even as his movements augment his knowledge of this "other" world and generate a self-consciousness about how he sees and knows the world.³ Never just physical movement across space, the emotional self embarks upon a psychological journey where the traveling "I" must navigate unfamiliar territory and attempt to bring peculiar sights into alignment with the individual's perception of the world.

We like to believe that travel provides pure pleasure and allows us the freedom to explore new scenes and try on different personas. Yet, this study demonstrates that American travelers struggle with the contradictions between home and abroad, familiar and unfamiliar, and self and *other*. As Trinh Minh-ha explains in her analysis of third world exiles and refugees, travel involves a "re-siting of boundaries," and the individual must "constantly . . . negotiate between home and abroad, native culture and adopted culture, or more creatively speaking, between a here, a there, *and* an elsewhere" (9). Characterized by novel experiences, new perspectives, and views of different cultures, passing through different territories provides a new-found knowledge that compels us to reconsider ourselves, our nation, how our ideological system operates, and our relation to the greater world. At its best, it can be "fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness," as Twain once put it (*Innocents* 498). However, these journeys also can

³ As Eric J. Leed explains, travel provides knowledge "about the self of the passenger" and creates a "prolonged and intensified context of change in which one may become aware of those invariant veils, frames, and screens meditating one's observations of the world" (72). *The Mind of the Traveler: from Gilgamesh to Global Tourism*. New York: Basic Books, 1991.

create what is recognized here as the anxiety of travel. This is not the hand-sweating apprehension that we all experience at one time or another. It is not the uneasiness associated with getting from point A to point B in a new place. Rather, this is a specific type of distress caused by the notion that one's identity, or one's "I," is at stake during travel. It evidences itself through narrative gaps and elisions; through uncharacteristic outpourings of emotion, including sentimentality, nostalgia, anger, and despair; through the idealization of the self, one's personal narrative, and one's sense of the past, as well as the idealization of America.

The Dialectics of Travel

That Twain, Dreiser, Cather, and James (and so many others) struggled with similar issues yet journey to different places suggests that this anxiety can exist regardless of one's destination. Yet, when most scholars approach texts within the genre, they typically divide the material into two separate categories: texts that document domestic travel and those that detail foreign travel. In most analyses, the separation is essential because the topics demand such division. Catherine Cocks's *Doing the Town*, which documents the rise of urban tourism in America, and Marguerite Shaffer's *See America First*, which chronicles the emergence of the "See America First" campaign, necessarily exclude journeys outside of the United States. In the same way, William W. Stowe's *Going Abroad* only considers the motives for European travel, while Terry Caesar's *Forgiving the Boundaries* examines how writing about abroad affects "America's imagination of itself as a nation" (8). Of these, only Caesar addresses the decision to omit narratives of American tours from his study. Arguing that movement

“within national borders simply lacks the political force of travel across them” and asserting that going abroad places “more at stake than culture,” Caesar maintains that there is something more than regional identity at stake when Americans cross the ocean (163). From his perspective, when New Yorkers travel throughout the United States, they can “‘feel good’ about New York, but when that same New Yorker travels abroad, he or she is also an American who “has to feel good about the difference far more problematically (and perhaps not even New Yorkishly)” (163). While Emily Post is perhaps best known for her etiquette advice, her 1916 *By Motor to the Golden Gate*, which chronicles her road trip from New York to San Francisco, reinforces such views. As one “booster” in Chicago informed Post, his city has “more real homes,” superior parks, and is “the greatest railroad center in the whole world” (66, 67). According to this Chicagoan, “New York can never equal Chicago commercially!” (67). Such remarks demonstrate the rivalry that continues even today between different regions of the United States. Between the North and South, the East and West Coast, and even within regions, as in the ongoing rivalry between North and South Carolina.

But New Yorkers (and perhaps even some Chicagoans) who cross the nation are not always concerned with their own home town. They do not always interpret the nation through that narrow, regional lens. Some domestic travel narratives written during the early years of the twentieth century reveal anxiety over immigration, capitalist expansion, and the spread of its ideology. Some also express concern about the transformation of the nation’s physical and cultural landscape and the subsequent decimation of the nation’s past brought on by these changes. Such narratives indicate that leisurely movement within the States does more than simply reaffirm regional identities. Personal and

national identities are just as important in these texts as in narratives that chronicle travel abroad. Both *The American Scene* and *A Hoosier Holiday* demonstrate how regional identity can be secondary to national identity. Concern for New York emerges as a major tension in *The American Scene*. And Dreiser's Midwestern heritage is a key theme in *A Hoosier Holiday*. However, the desire to discover and safeguard American identity surfaces as a central issue in both works. James and Dreiser used their travels as an attempt to discern "America" and to identify the "American." Not only did they write about travel, but they also unknowingly provided a snapshot of the nation moments before the war forever changed how Americans viewed themselves and the world.

This study examines a number of travel narratives from both known and lesser-known writers, and these texts show that Americans traveling within national borders struggle with some of the same issues that plague those in Europe.⁴ Regardless of their destination, Americans are often confronted with issues such as how one's sense of self and nation are transformed by travel, as in Dreiser and Twain; how a particular place compares to one's expectations, an issue that Twain constantly faces in *Following the*

⁴ My decision to include lesser known travel narratives stems from a desire to demonstrate the pervasiveness of the anxiety of travel and to explore it as an American phenomenon. By limiting one's study of travel writing to "masterful" texts, scholars necessarily limit their ability to discover exactly what Americas experienced when they embarked upon these journeys. Although their writing styles and observations may not be as polished and sophisticated as the Whartons and Jameses of the world, their narratives nonetheless serve a definite purpose in this study. These travel writers are influenced by the masters, and their texts respond to works that are considered the standard of the genre. But these "average" Americans seem more forthright in how they tell their stories. While Wharton and James often ignore the unseemly and the ordinary in their narratives, these other travelers typically include common, every day scenes in their descriptions. Consequently, they can provide a more accurate, less idealized portrait of a particular space. At the same time, both Wharton and James are highly privileged, well-educated, and extremely well-traveled. Their opinions and experiences typically do not reflect those of average Americans and, though their travel writing is invaluable, it can fall short of speaking to some of the issues raised by a study such as this one. Thus, while I do not ignore travel writing by the masters and while I do explore the anxieties in their narratives, I also seek to broaden our understanding of the genre and of American travel by examining the journeys of an expanded group of travelers. Finally, reading these lesser known texts not only provides the advantages laid out here, but it also opens up a way to view texts like *Italian Backgrounds* and *A Motor-Flight through France* with a fresh eye and with a new way of understanding travel and travel writing.

Equator and that Cather, James, and Dreiser face in their own travels; how to situate the historic (or personal) past in the modern-day scene, a key issue of concern for James and Dreiser, as well as Mary Austin in *The Land of Little Rain*; and whether one will interact with or flee racial and social others, a central theme in narratives by Cather, James, Dreiser, and Wharton. These issues are significant matters of concern for American travel writers, especially in the early twentieth century. By examining these themes in the same theoretical space, we begin to see how anxiety functions in the genre itself, how it can transcend destination, and how it affects Americans almost anytime they set out. Such a study also reveals how these writers reshape and redefine travel writing as they work through these issues.

Additionally, whether crossing national borders or state lines, American travelers seem intuitively mindful of the fading past and the ever-present modern scene. According to Alan Trachtenberg's study of turn of the century America, it was "commonplace" to see "old landmarks destroyed, new structures of a different kind hoisted in their place; a new scale of tall building obliterating older buildings," and "neighborhoods changing their face as well as their ethnic and social character" (118). Travel narratives of this period are often marked by a simultaneous desire to gaze backward even as the individual moves forward and tours modern spaces. In these works, the past is often viewed nostalgically and the portrayal of the present reveals both excitement and hesitation. In his 1903, "The Wonders of New York: 1903 and 1909," John Brisben Walker theorizes about what life might be like at the end of the twentieth century's first decade. Although his article is a sociological argument rather than a travel narrative, it nonetheless demonstrates my point about the tendency of simultaneously looking hopefully and

anxiously into the future. Imagining that 1909 will usher in a revival of education, Walker posits that library books will be delivered at no charge to the homes of anyone who wants them, and he has visions that “an instructor will be sent by the public libraries to every home once or twice a year to assist members of the family by his advice in the selection of books and to encourage special courses of study” (154). At the same time, Walker hopes for a more stable society and a day when the “hordes of immigrants” entering the city will be “in a measure educated and assimilated” and when poverty will become “less pronounced and wealth more common” (148). He is equally optimistic about the city’s development, and he asserts that “the rapid growth in country districts in the past ten years” will lead to “a continuous city along the Atlantic seaboard, five hundred miles in length—even to Washington” (145). However, buried in all of this is Walker’s quiet acknowledgement of some of the nation’s most anxiety-inducing concerns: economic disparity, immigration, the over-development of roads and rail, the destruction of the physical landscape, and the too-rapid urbanization of small cities and towns.

Portraits such as Walker’s highlight the contradictions of modernity and reveal what Peter Conn, in his analysis of American culture and ideology between 1898 and 1917, has called the “profound internal dialectic” (1). According to Conn, a major debate was taking place at this time, a conflict between “tradition and innovation,” change and stasis, rural and urban life, and the desire to preserve the past while constructing the present (1). For many, the anxiety associated with touring (or just living in) this dialectical space fomented a desire to escape the tumultuous present and retreat into a space reminiscent of the past. There, it was believed, one could find a sense of stability.

Fiction at this time reflects such desires, and texts such as Cather's *The Professor's House* and *My Antonia* and Wharton's *The Age of Innocence* reveal this penchant for looking backward. In a similar fashion, in *The Land of Little Rain*, a book written "when life stood at a breathing pause between the old ways and the new," Mary Austin flees to a space that is the very antithesis of the modern world (qtd. in Hass xi). In Southeast California's secluded desert and mountain regions, Austin describes a place where mountains replace skyscrapers, and rivers and trails replace roads and rail. Here, maps are unreliable and one is advised to "trust" the trails because "they *know*" (13). In her closing, Austin invites her readers, those "who are obsessed with your own importance in the scheme of things, and have got nothing you did not sweat for," to "come away by the brown valleys and full-bosomed hills to the even-breathing days, to the kindness, earthiness, ease of El Pueblo de Las Uvas" (109).

Griselda Pollock studies Paul Gauguin as an "artistic tourist travelling through colonial space in order to traverse time—both historically and psychically," but her conclusions are nonetheless relevant to American travel writers, especially Austin (63). The type of journey that Austin embarks upon provides what Pollock has called a "momentary vision of a mythic place apparently outside time, a 'before-now' place, a garden before the fall—into modernity" (64). The mythic or "fantastic landscape," to borrow Pollock's language, portrayed by Austin is anathema to the contemporary scene (64). The natural world that she describes clashes with modern America in the same way that Gauguin's images of naked Tahitian women conflict with conventional western perceptions of womanhood. For Austin, the metropolis evokes a "sense of loss, lack and discontinuity," but the Southwest (or any other space of escape) is characterized by life

and nature and continuity (Pollock 64). Austin provides a means by which American readers and travelers, should they decide to follow her footpath, can escape their twentieth-century world and explore a natural space seemingly untouched by modernity.

But Americans did not just flee to the nation's most remote spaces. Some, like Myrtle I. Barrett, ventured directly into the cities, yet such journeys did not necessarily indicate a stable relationship with modernity or urbanity. Beginning in Kansas in June 1914, Barrett motored eastward across twelve states and visited New York City, Pittsburgh, and Boston. Her goal was not to "describe the cities" (5). Instead, she wanted to discover the nation's natural beauty and share the "freshness of the green covered hills and valleys" (5). The resulting text, the privately published *Our Wondrous Trip*, reveals the pervasiveness of this particular type of anxiety and nostalgia, and it serves as an indicator of how Americans used touring as a method for exploring (and avoiding) twentieth-century life. What's more, Barrett's way of touring is grounded in a nineteenth-century European paradigm of travel that is similar to how James approaches a site, and her short book provides an opportunity to study what happens when that type of gaze is imposed on urban scenes throughout twentieth-century America. Barrett's journey into the modern world is extremely tentative, and she portrays her tour as a paradigm for lifting oneself above "the turmoil of the world" to a place where the "sun seemed just a little brighter" and where "buttercups" and "the lovely roses of June, brighten you with their radiant colors" (5,6). Such language evokes nineteenth-century romantic poetry, and we can easily imagine Barrett, with a volume of Wordsworth in her hands, wandering as "lonely as a cloud" and looking for daffodils among the skyscrapers of Manhattan.

Throughout her tour, Barrett crosses into America's largest and most commercial cities, yet her comments are no less romanticized. In Pittsburgh, she looks down upon the city from the top of a hill. Sheltered by distance and darkness—she views the city at night—Barrett is awestruck by the view. As she puts it, “as far as we could see the city appeared a marvel of illumination; millions and millions it seemed, of lights . . . shining out from boulevards and by streets, outlining skyscrapers and huge electric signs” (11). From her vantage point, “far above the scene,” the city “below was one of entrancing beauty, tranquil and yet so full of hidden life” (11). In New York, Barrett likewise decides to avoid the harsh reality of the urban scene. Deciding that she “shall not dwell upon” the city’s “marvelous” commercial landscape, she instead documents her tour of the “Bronx park zoological gardens,” where she marvels over “rare pink feathered parrots” and “pond lilies,” those “great waxen beauties, lying so still upon the waters, white, purple, yellow and red ones” (34, 35). Later, at the “famous Van Courtlandt estates,” she is fascinated by “hundreds of relics of the Revolutionary War” (37). By choosing only to look at Pittsburgh through eyes buffered by darkness and distance, by visiting a garden and an historical estate in nation’s biggest metropolis, Barrett attempts to subordinate America’s modern, metropolitan scene to nature and the historic, and she demonstrates how tourism permits one to encounter modernity, or at least deflect it, from the removed vantage point of a safe and familiar space.

The journeys of Austin and Barrett indicate both the anxiety and the nostalgic impulses that Americans experienced during this period, and their narratives reveal how travel provided an opportunity to avoid modernity and discover sites that represented the past. Such travel fulfills a psychological desire to re-connect with the past even as the

individual grapples with the present. Lawrence W. Levine has analyzed the relation between nostalgia and progress in American culture, and he argues that nostalgia serves as an “historical force no less prevalent and perhaps no less important than the idea of progress” (190). Barrett’s *Our Wondrous Trip* indicates how early twentieth-century travelers responded to the “compulsion to peer forward” and the simultaneous “urge to look backward to more pristine, more comfortable, more familiar time” (Levine 190). Arthur P. Dudden, in his examination of nostalgia in America, advises that “the seeker for clues” of the American past “can discover a deep-seated, heartfelt, romantic longing for the yesterday that is gone but is never to be forgotten” (516). By touching the past through travel, nostalgic, modernity-weary Americans could better comprehend the relation between the old way of life and the new.

But escapist travel, travel to avoid the modern, only partially explains why Americans look backward when they travel. The narratives examined here also suggest that the past does more than evoke memories and provide a familiar place of stasis. In the journeys of Cather, James, and Dreiser, the past becomes an object of fixation. For many who set out on these journeys that foreground that past, there is a “desire to recover an original lost home,” to quote Porter, and the texts examined here reflect that longing and reveal the anxiety associated with the sense that the original home has been lost (12). Additionally, Americans at this time were tremendously nostalgic, a word that has its roots in the Greek *nostos*, meaning to return home. Thus, their travel narratives are characterized by this sentimental yearning to return, by an insecurity with the past, and by fears that the past cannot be assimilated into the present. That intense desire to “recover” the past and one’s origins operates as a central force of the narrative. It implies the desire

to take back something once lost, and Americans consistently embark upon journeys that may be identified as origins travel, a return to an historical site—whether personal or national—that represents beginnings.

For example, movement through Europe consistently reveals the American desire to return to what may be the site of personal origins for some, and yet a collective, national ancestry for all. The term “*Herkunft*,” defined by Foucault as “the equivalent of stock or descent” or the “ancient affiliation to a group, sustained by the bonds of blood, tradition, or social class,” is useful here because Americans often seek out such historical connections when they travel (*Foucault* 80-81). They return to those spaces that reinforce a particular bond, whether of blood or culture. According to his travel narratives, William Dean Howells spends much of his time in England pursuing those spaces that solidify the American-English bond. In *Seven English Cities*, he writes about touring the namesakes of American cities and tracking down landmarks that provide insight into our “Pilgrim Fathers and the gentlemen and scholars who later founded Boston in Massachusetts Bay” (*Seven* 109). Howells documents his pilgrimages to “mother Boston” (103), and while there he pays a visit to the Church of St. Botolph, where John Cotton was the vicar until his “conflict with the authorities went so far that exile to another Boston in another hemisphere became his only hope” (101).

Howells’s “divine journey” leads him to various places “associated with American saints or heroes” (97). He “skirted the Ralph Waldo Emerson country,” and shares a humorous anecdote about how a “pleasant” afternoon “drowse” in a riding carriage abruptly ended when his traveling companion cried out: ““There! That is where Captain John Smith was born”” (97). Unfortunately, the alarm comes “too late,” and

Howells's "Where? Where?" is met with: "Back where those chickens were" (98). We may snicker at the image of a sleepy Howells careening about to catch a glimpse of Smith's birthplace, but his English travels constantly reiterate that nearly insatiable desire to encounter these symbolic places of American origins. Had America been an ancient *American* land, had the nation's past not been so entangled with English history, perhaps Howells would not confess to harboring an "instant hunger for Boston, which was greater than my hunger for dinner" (99). Such desperate desires for historical continuums demonstrate how travel, and especially the journey back to England, can serve as an opportunity to discover an *Herkunftian* bond or "network" between the two countries that is lasting and "difficult to unravel" (*Foucault* 81).

Origins travel within the United States often indicates a similar desire, whether one is retracing individual history or attempting to recover some aspect of the national narrative (think touring the Old West or exploring Native American grounds). For years, Americans grappled with the notion that their culture was "fundamentally European," as George Herbert Mead once put it (217). This sense that the national culture was borrowed and was not an accurate "interpretation of American life" fomented a desire to re-present that culture in specific American terms (Mead 217). Narratives that chronicle domestic travel often reflect this desire to discover an authentic American culture. At times, writers make stringent efforts to narrate (or even fabricate) something that is uniquely American. In *Roughing It*, Twain helped to establish the identity—and stereotype—of the Southwest. He writes about "the outlaws that infested the region" (78) and documents his "discomfort" in knowing that "many of the trees we dashed by at arm's length concealed a lurking Indian or two" (75). Such commentary helped to shape the image of the region,

and Emily Post, in *By Motor to the Golden Gate*, constructed her portrait of the area around this model and reinscribed those same stereotypes. She is thrilled at the very thought of reaching “the gateway of the land of adventure,” and the notion that “cowboys, prairie schooners, and Indians may possibly still be found” here electrifies her (138). More, in a celebration of the Southwest’s mystique, Post claims that the region is “vast, rugged, splendidly desolate, big in size, big in thought, big in ideals, with a few threads of enchanting history like that of Santa Fé, or vividly colored romances of frontier life and Indian legends that vie with Kipling’s jungle books” (163). Although her portrait pays a greater tribute to the myth than the reality of the Southwest, Post’s commentary reaffirms the historic conceptualization of the region and reveals her ardent desire to encounter a decidedly “American” place.

Eight years later, in *The Land of Journey’s Ending*, Austin offered a corrective to such narrow portrayals and attempted to inject new conceptions of the Southwest into the national narrative. Hers is a backwards journey which provides a glimpse of the pre-American past, demonstrates the place of such a past in the modern moment, and creates a link between the historic past and the present. Eschewing the wild stereotypes, Austin recounts the stories of the Spanish conquistadores, the Amerinds, and the “unending westward movement of the English-speaking” (220) in an effort to show “the many-colored skein of the past” (222). Writing of “cultural beginnings” and confessing that her “business is prophesy,” Austin constructs a narrative continuum that speaks to the desire for an authentic American story (442). Although her version of history fails to offer a purely American narrative (hers necessarily reinforces European influence and ties), Austin broadens the historical narrative of America, recovers what was typically a lost—

or ignored—aspect of the nation’s historical record, and creates a solid relation between the nation’s past and present.

Theoretical Foundations

Because of the centrality of origins, the past, and the undercurrent of anxiety in these narratives, aspects of psychoanalytic theory are fundamental to this analysis. Freud’s thoughts on these feelings, castration, and the uncanny are especially relevant to this study, and my reference to these theories represents my effort to clarify the anxiety that these travelers experience, to bring it down to its most basic level, and to provide a set of terms that may be used to explore this phenomenon. In *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, Freud locates such psychological tension in the fear of losing or “being separated from a highly valued object” (66). For Freud, “the process of birth” represents the original “situation of danger, and the economic upheaval which it produces becomes the prototype of the reaction of anxiety” (83). After determining “the line of development which connects this first danger-situation and determinant of anxiety with all later ones,” Freud concludes that such situations “signify . . . a sense of separation from the mother—at first only a biological sense, next as a direct loss of object and later as a loss of object incurred indirectly” (83). According to Freud, such loss—and even the dread of loss—is related to “the danger of castration or of something traceable back to castration” (57).

This connection is further explored in “The Uncanny.” In this essay, Freud develops the relation between the fear of castration and this peculiar type of nervousness. He postulates that, for children, the thought of “damaging or losing their eyes” causes great distress, and he suggests that many “retain this anxiety into adult life and fear no

physical injury so much as one to the eye” (139). Freud’s research of “dreams, fantasies, and myths,” including texts such as *Oedipus Rex*, leads him to conclude that “anxiety about one’s eyes, the fear of going blind, is quite often a substitute for the fear of castration” (139). These theories are relevant to this study because it is precisely these foreboding emotions that American travelers experience when they travel. It is not about losing one’s genitalia or eyes, but rather an intense concern over somehow becoming separated from one’s absolute sense of “I,” or identity, during travel.

These anxieties are amplified when the traveler encounters what Freud calls the “uncanny,” which he identifies as “that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar” (124). According to Freud, the “secret nature of the uncanny” makes it possible for “the familiar (*das Heimliche*, the ‘homely’) to switch to its opposite, the uncanny (*das Unheimliche*, the ‘unhomely’)” (148). More, as Freud argues, “this uncanny element is actually nothing new or strange, but something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed” (148). Although the concept seems at first straightforward, the terms, *das Heimliche* and *das Unheimliche*, are problematic in and of themselves. Recognizing this, Freud begins his study by tracing the semantic development of “the word *heimlich*” (126). He quotes a lengthy entry from Daniel Sanders’s 1860 edition of *Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache* and finds that *heimlich* has two meanings: one associated with the “homely and the domestic” and one that concerns “the notion of something removed from the eyes of strangers, hidden, secret” (133). For Freud, the combination of the latter definition and the use of the term *heimlich* to reference “secret places” reaffirms his own

theories about repressed desire and fears. Accordingly, as he sees it, “the uncanny derives from what was once familiar and then repressed” (153).

At the same time, Freud learns that *unheimlich* refers to something that is “clearly the opposite of *heimlich*” (124). Etymologically, it is related to “unhomely,” and it points to the thing which causes great consternation (134). As Freud discovers, the *unheimlich* “belongs to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread” (123). But, there is a caveat to all of this. Just because something is considered strange does not mean that it is necessarily uncanny. As Freud explains:

not everything new and unfamiliar is frightening. All one can say is that what is novel may well prove frightening and uncanny; some things that are novel are indeed frightening, but by no means all. Something must be added to the novel and the unfamiliar if it is to become uncanny. (125)

For Freud, that additional “something” is the emergence of a repressed desire or memory. That is the key element of Freud’s understanding of the phenomenon. He even confesses that his attention is “seized” by the notion that “the term ‘uncanny’ (*unheimlich*) applies to everything that was intended to remain secret, hidden away, and has come into the open” (132).

Such veiled desires play a central role in American travel. Certainly, the concept of repression helps to explain why Dreiser confesses his longing to “get back” to Indiana (*Hoosier* 286). However, *heimlich* has another meaning that can also help us to understand why American journeys become anxious. Freud himself recognizes that other situations may also be perceived as frightening or uncanny, and he claims that “we should probably be prepared to assume that other conditions, apart from those we have so

far laid out, play an important part in the emergence of a sense of the uncanny” (153). Thus, we turn to another element of Freud’s analysis in an effort to discern this relation between the uncanny and travel. Throughout the essay, Freud continually pairs *das Heimliche* with “the homely” and *das Unheimliche* with “the unhomely.” Such associations are especially relevant to those journeys that Americans take to places that are considered familiar but which ultimately evoke a sense of anxiety and alienation. We know that *das Heimliche* refers to something secret and hidden, yet it also has been associated with something “belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, dear and intimate, homely, etc.” (126). More specifically, it denotes something that is “intimate, cozily homely” and is capable of “arousing a pleasant feeling of quiet contentment, etc, of comfortable repose and secure protection, like the enclosed comfortable house” (127). *Das Heimliche*, then, is a word of dual meaning. Yet even in this etymological space, the separation of home and secret is hardly absolute. *Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache* indicates that *heimlich* can also be used as in “*Ich habe Wurzeln/die sind gar heimlich,/im tiefen Boden/bin ich gegründet*, ‘I have roots that are very secret; I am grounded in the deep soil’” (130). Such usage demonstrates the relation between the notion of “roots,” which can be traced back to the recognizable and the home, and “secret” or hidden, the very essence of the uncanny (130). And as Freud discovers, the term does, in fact, merge with *das Unheimliche*, its “formal antonym . . . so that what is called *heimlich* becomes *Unheimlich*” (132). Freud calls that “the most interesting fact to emerge” in his investigation, and in the context of American travel, it is precisely this blurring of what is familiar and what is frightening that causes these journeys to be anxious.

Thus, like Priscilla Wald in *Constituting Americans*, I approach the uncanny as the “transmutation of something ‘old and long familiar’ into something frightening” (6). According to Wald, Freud’s exploration of the uncanny reveals not only that the “unfamiliar is really familiar” but also that the “familiar is unfamiliar” (7). While Wald references Freud’s theory to help explain the relation between writers like Gertrude Stein and Frederick Douglass and the larger, national narratives that “constituted them as authors” (3), this analysis evokes the concept in an effort to name the phenomenon that occurs when physical spaces that once represented comfort and security (*das Heimliche*) morph into something that the traveler perceives as uncanny (*das Unheimliche*) or unsettling to the point of anxiety. Whereas Freud’s subject experiences such feelings because the demons and desires of the past have re-emerged, the traveler struggles with a sense of apprehension and alienation in response to the transformation of a sacred landscape. For the traveler, the anxiety stems from the dichotomy between preconceived notions about a destination and the reality of the scene. If the reality is not commensurate with the reputation, the myth, or one’s memories, the individual must negotiate the difference.

But that is not always an easy task. In many cases, the sensation of being lost in a place of expected familiarity and the associated feelings of displacement and loss compels Americans to retreat to both emotional and physical spaces that provide psychological comfort. Some, like Cather, may seek out clichéd landmarks—the prototypical tourist spots—in an effort to recover the mythological qualities of a site. Yet, even these tactics can generate angst. Others, like James and Dreiser, attempt to situate themselves in a space reminiscent of the past, with the modern scene carefully relegated

to the outside, a strategy that may provide some comfort but is just as likely to cause despair and anguish. Regardless of how they attempt to deal with the gap between myth and reality, these distressed travelers tend to retreat and latch on to conservative or idealistic images of themselves and/or America, and that widens the chasm between the traveler and the scenes that have emerged as threats. In each situation, they cling to an idealized version of their own personal history and identity. Sometimes, they fall back on their national identity and with Mark Twain say: “We always took care to make it understood that we were Americans—Americans!” (*Innocents* 493). At other times, bravado is put aside and the text becomes laden with nostalgic or patriotic idealisms, indignation, hopelessness, and despondency. Regardless of how this unease reveals itself, these individuals resist the transformative effects of travel and attempt to cloak themselves in the stable and familiar. Consequently, the resulting narrative not only documents anxious travels, but it also portrays the journeying “I” engaged in the act of self-preservation.

Elizabeth Pennell, in her 1914 *Our Philadelphia*, details her return to the city after a two-decade absence, and her experience evokes these sensations. Because she had lived in Europe for more than twenty years, Pennell was unable to witness the transformation of her native city as a gradual process. She is thus overwhelmed by the changes that have taken place in her absence, and her narrative indicates the dismay associated with discovering a home that is more strange than familiar. As she puts it: “Whatever Philadelphia might have developed, or deteriorated, into, it was not any longer the Philadelphia I had known and loved” (452). Such remarks distinguish Pennell’s return as uncanny, and she struggles with the knowledge that the city she had once known no

longer exists. Her conception of Philadelphia as home has been irretrievably lost and, as she explores the town, she finds that:

Wherever I went, wherever I turned, I stumbled upon an equally impossible jumble of the familiar and the unfamiliar. At times, I positively ached with the joy of finding places so exactly as I remembered them that I caught myself saying, just here ‘this’ happened, or ‘that,’ as I and my Youth met ourselves; at others I could have cried for the absurdity, the tragedy, of finding everything so different that never in a foreign land had I seemed more hopelessly a foreigner. (452)

Pennell’s assertion that she “met” her “Youth” in certain environs suggests the relation between the nostalgic return and identity. In this instance, physical movement through space and psychological passage through time serve to reaffirm not only a sense of place but also identity. For a moment, her “I” is safe. However, that Pennell also “stumbled” about the city implies an inability to regain her footing on her native ground. Although she successfully locates “traces” of her past where memory and the present moment merge without the interference of modernity, the loss of the familiar or *das heimliche* is nearly impossible to recover from. The transformation of Pennell’s beloved Philadelphia leaves her feeling stranded in a “foreign” place, lost and alienated from the home that she once knew and from her sense of self. Her uncanny travels, then, force her to grapple with the notion that the idea of “home,” as Priscilla Wald explains, is not necessarily “what or where we think it is and that we, by extension, are not who or what we think we are” (7).

The incongruities between what one believes a place to be and what one sees can generate deep anxiety and feelings of irreversible loss: not only of the native space, but also of one's sense of self. This chasm between one's expectations or assumptions and the perceived reality represents the place where the anxiety of travel begins. As so many of these narratives demonstrate, the trauma of such an experience can result in a type of a psychological castration where travelers feel that they have been severed from the past and from the very foundation of identity. That current flows through the narratives of Dreiser, Pennell, Twain, and the other writers in this study. The feeling that they have lost (or are in danger of losing) some fundamental aspect of their personal and/or national identity consistently stems from this cataclysmic moment of disconnect where the familiar morphs into something strange and unfamiliar.

Although Freud's theories are extremely useful to this analysis, his version of things has certain limitations and represents only one component of the theoretical foundation of *Anxious Journeys*. I have already indicated the applicability of Foucault's notions about "*Herkunft*," or the blood or cultural bonds that join groups together. His thoughts on the cultivation of the self, the introspective process by which an individual strives to better oneself, are equally relevant to this study. Additionally, Lacan's theories about the "mirror stage" and the desire to return to the Imaginary provide a useful theoretical paradigm in the context of American travel, especially for those who return home after an extended absence. Finally, Hélène Cixous's theories in "The Laugh of the Medusa" and "Castration or Decapitation" serve as an apt point of departure for examining women's travel writing. Cixous's assertion that a woman writer "couldn't care less about the fear of decapitation (or castration)" and her postulation that a woman can

“merge” into “anonymity” “without annihilating herself” is an extraordinary pronouncement of the easy fluidity and underlying stability of female identity (“Laugh” 888). According to Cixous, women are “outside the Symbolic” because they lack “any relation to the Phallus” and because they are not bound by “what orders society—the castration complex” (“Castration” 46). Freed thusly from the hierarchical constructs of society and from the patriarchal “I,” these women should—should—be able to immerse themselves in *another* culture without the fear of losing themselves or their “I.” Such assurances, following Cixous’s logic, permits women travelers to penetrate more deeply into a foreign space—to not only see Culture via museums and cathedrals (the Symbolic), but to experience domestic culture and other ways of life. It also challenges women to write about their journeys in a way that defies the rules and expectations of women’s writing, the conventions of travel, and the ideologies of gender.

The freedom to explore such scenes evidences itself in *Hap-Hazard*, an 1873 narrative that, among other things, describes Kate Field’s tour through Rome during carnival. In a chapter entitled “A Lecture on Masks,” Field writes specifically about the thrill of anonymity that wearing a mask provides, and her remarks point to the freedom that may be obtained by travel. According to Field, “the person who has never worn a mask in the spirit of a mask has failed to experience one of the most novel and exhilarating of sensations” (87). The mask, she continues, provides a release from “all rules of etiquette” and gives a woman “for the only time in her life . . . an advantage over men” (87). It allows her the freedom to “roam at discretion among a wilderness of swallow-tails, without recognition and without reproach. Put on a mask and she may be herself; take it off and she must be somebody else” (87-88). It is an experience “as

refreshing as being dropped into a foreign country in full possession of a clairvoyant knowledge of its inhabitants” (88).⁵

Touring and travel writing provided other late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century women whose lives were guided by conservative notions of womanhood an opportunity to explore unfamiliar territory, expand their world views, and challenge conventions. William W. Stowe has studied the motives behind nineteenth-century American travel, and he suggests that “Europe served as a stage for independent self-definition, for establishing personal relations with culture and society that did not necessarily fit the conventional patterns prescribed by hometown and family standards” (5). Travel writing, then, allows the individual to “rewrite and in a sense to relive their travel experiences, and to recast themselves as the kind of narrators, protagonists, and travelers they most wanted to be” (Stowe 55). While such remarks seem true for men and women, men appear to use touring to solidify their position as the dominant male while women often use it as a means of expanding and transforming gender roles.

Just as Mark Twain, Henry James, and Theodore Dreiser confidently assume their positions as interpreters of culture in *Following the Equator*, *Italian Hours*, and *A*

⁵ Emma Hart Willard’s letters from Europe in 1830-31 also reveal how a woman can use travel to situate herself in a position of narrative authority and use her space “outside of the Symbolic” to forge a new path for women. Rather than writing about conventional sites and scenes, Willard depicts European life and ways of living because she believes it is “important” that these things “should be known in my own country” (7). She even follows in the footsteps of Xavier de Maistre who, in *Voyage around My Room*, writes about how “glorious it is to blaze a new trail” (de Maistre 3). Like de Maistre, Willard describes her own room in great detail, as if taking her reader on a tour. While such descriptions are not uncommon in travel writing by women, it speaks to a desire to communicate culture and space in an alternative manner. At the same time, Willard also wants to “correct” what she sees as the “false standards of public opinion, or erroneous estimates of ourselves, and others” (7). She pushes against the limitations that society has placed on women and makes the bold pronouncement, for that time, that there is nothing “degrading in a woman’s doing any thing to earn money” (26). Such writing challenges the patriarchal structure of travel writing and seeks to move women beyond their conventional places in the Symbolic order. See Willard, Emma Hart. *Journal and Letters, from France and Great-Britain*. 1833. *Telling Travels: Selected Writings by Nineteenth-Century American Women Abroad*. Ed. Mary Suzanne Schriber. DeKalb: Northern Illinois UP, 1995.

Traveler at Forty, Edith Wharton unapologetically judges, interprets, and conveys her opinions of art, history, architecture and more in her travel narratives. As Shirley Foster observes in her analysis of Wharton's travels, Wharton confidently "adopts the role of authoritative narrator-figure" and casts herself as an "active agent" of travel (131). In *Italian Backgrounds*, she fearlessly portrays herself as an explorer who braves uncertain weather and ventures forth to see "a new Italy, an Italy which discovery seems to make his own" place "beyond the geographer's boundaries" where "anything may happen, save the dull, the obvious and the expected" (128). By claiming such authority and entering these spaces without trepidation, Wharton shatters stereotypes of women as accidental tourists who obtain passage only under the protection of their husbands or fathers. As Mary Suzanne Schriber puts it in her survey of women's travel writing, such movement not only "seems to work against gender roles and the cultural forces that would ensure their continuation," but it "threatened the separation of spheres and the differences between the sexes" (27). In *A Motor-Flight through France*, Wharton once again defies the bounds of "womanly" travel. She thrills in the "sense of adventure" that comes with arriving in "a strange town after dark" because she clearly enjoys the challenge of casting "one's self upon the unknown" (6). From this perspective, we begin to see how travel provides women with an opportunity to "see what horizons the old masters looked out on" or, put differently, to look freely upon the world of men without fear (176).

Chapter Overview

Each chapter in *Anxious Journeys* focuses on a major canonical writer—Cather, Dreiser, and James—and a specific travel narrative authored by that individual. To reach

the goals of this dissertation, the analysis also references fiction as well as other nonfiction (both travel and autobiographical) texts by these same authors. By examining these works alongside travel writing, we can glean additional insight into how writers anticipate and reinterpret their journeys in fiction and how writing can provide catharsis as the individual struggles to cope with the trauma and anxiety that accompanies travel. In addition, the discussion frequently references such writing by other well-known American writers (such Edith Wharton and William Dean Howells), and it also considers a number of more obscure Americans who recorded their journeys. Their works contribute to our understanding of the American mood in the early twentieth century and reveal the cultural dialogue concerning issues such as the transformation of the national landscape, the relation between the past and present, immigration, and America's labor war. As a group, these narratives lay bare the depth of anxiety that accompanies Americans when they travel and provide a thorough portrait of travel as an American experience. My encounters with these texts revealed a need for a reassessment of what travel writing can do, of how travel writing is studied, of what a "site" really is, and how different travelers use their tourist's gaze and their narrative to comprehend and command a particular scene. These are the central questions that this study addresses.

The first chapter analyzes Willa Cather's articles from her 1902 journey to France and England. It focuses on Cather's apprehension over the Grand Tour and touring itself, European history and culture, and issues related to gender and class. The discussion also reveals Cather's struggle to preserve her "I" and find her place within the context of travel and travel writing. The first half of this chapter examines the articles written during Cather's tour of England. Most Americans abroad openly wrestle with the historical and

cultural ties between England and America, yet Cather is silent about such connections. She refuses to admit that her journey is *Herkunftian*. This section analyzes her refusal to openly acknowledge her identity as an American or as a woman and argues that, despite this, Cather's commentary consistently asserts her notions about America, women, as well as her ideas about what England and the English should and should not be. Also at issue are Cather's attempts to depart from conventional ways of touring and seeing the Motherland, though that turn away from Culture and History and the turn toward England as a living and breathing world generates just as much anxiety. When Cather writes about England's poor, her discourse becomes ethnocentric and, at times, down-right dehumanizing, and the discussion examines her attempts to delineate herself from such groups. The second half of this chapter focuses on Cather's travels through France, where she explores new territory and draws connections between French provincial life and her own girlhood. The analysis emphasizes Cather's intent to undermine traditional ways of portraying one's journey and, more importantly, to challenge patriarchal notions about interpreting culture and writing about travel.

Chapter two examines *A Hoosier Holiday* as Theodore Dreiser's intent to write a travel narrative that serves two separate purposes: to create a portrait of the American character and to narrate the story of his emotional return to Indiana. First, the discussion identifies and analyzes Dreiser's anxious engagement with a number of national issues including modernity in rural America, American superiority, and the more troubling aspects of American society—the ongoing battle between labor and capital, as well as the surging immigrant population. I also survey the development of America's tourist culture and situate Dreiser's narrative within that context. The second half of the chapter focuses

on Dreiser's personal encounter with Indiana. In particular, this section examines how returning to his childhood home ruptures Dreiser's nostalgic way of (re)membering his personal past, undermines his version of his own history, and elucidates the relation between place and identity. Although Dreiser attempts to balance optimism and consternation, past and present, as well as national and personal, the text vacillates between fracture and wholeness, and it thoroughly demonstrates the significance of anxiety in travel.

Chapter three analyzes Henry James's *The American Scene* through a Freudian lens, taking as the point of departure Freud's ideas about the uncanny. Because James perceives America as a strangely familiar place, he struggles to find a point of entry for himself, a place where he can enter America and rediscover the sacred spaces that he once knew. Beginning with a discussion of James as a sentimental tourist, this chapter explores James's way of seeing America, and I interrogate James's subject position as a tourist. The first section examines his responses to such personal and cultural landmarks as Trinity Church and the Boston Athenæum. Additionally, the discussion demonstrates the ways in which the physical transformation of residential architecture reflects what James sees as the demise of the home's ideological meaning in America. But the nation's uncanniness is not just revealed in physical places. The immigrant presence also makes James's native land seem foreign, and this chapter considers his touristic reaction to the "alien" faces that he sees. Next, the discussion turns to an analysis of James the "urban tourist" and his treatment metropolitan spaces. Here, I argue that James may not be as overwhelmed by the cityscape as some would like to believe. Instead, the analysis reveals that the modern scene actually stimulates and excites James and that it liberates a new

creativity in his writing. To conclude both the chapter and the final section on James the tourist, the discussion examines James's intent to recapture a sense of the national past in his American travels. An analysis of his tours of Mount Vernon, Philadelphia, and Richmond close the chapter.

**“Poverty and decrepitude,” “Boat-women,” and “the stormy years”:
Class, Gender, and History in Willa Cather’s European Travel Writing**

On June 14, 1902, Willa Cather and her long-time friend Isabel McClung boarded the *Noorland* in Philadelphia and sailed for twelve days, disembarking on June 26 to begin a three-month European tour. It was a trip that Cather seemed destined to take. Her interactions with “European immigrants . . . on the Divide, the German-French culture of the Wieners in *Red Cloud*, her early love of the classics, her deep immersion in French literature starting in college, her reviewing of books and plays by European authors and playwrights, her wide reading of British writers”—according to James Woodress, “all these factors drew her inevitably to the Old World” (156). Arriving in Liverpool on what was to be Edward VII’s coronation day, Cather found the city arrayed for festivities; however, due to the king’s unexpected illness, the coronation had been postponed. Cather and McClung spent most of that day rambling through lavishly adorned streets and watching the revelers, and Cather could barely suppress her shock at the appearance of the city’s lower classes. It was, as George N. Kates observes, “an odd and unanticipated introduction, into a world not of beauty but of realism” (4). After visiting Chester, Shropshire, and London, Cather and McClung set off for France. They made stops in Dieppe, Rouen, Paris, Barbizon, and Avignon, and then traveled to Marseilles and Hyères. They lingered in Le Lavandou, and meandered through Arles and Provence before making their way back to England and setting sail for home. The journey was one

of many, and from her early days as a journalist to her final days as a novelist, Cather's writing was dramatically affected by the people and places of Europe.⁶

In *Willa Cather Living*, Edith Lewis writes about the relation between Cather's first European tour and her development as a writer. According to Lewis, the journey was "a great imaginative experience" for Cather, and Lewis claims that, for an "artist" like Cather, "there is nothing quite like that first encounter with European culture on its own soil" (55). Even more specifically, Lewis suggests that: "French culture, coming to it as [Cather] did in her most impressionable years, and finding it so new, so challenging and awakening, spoke more directly to her imagination, and more definitely influenced her writing" (56). Lewis is not the only one to postulate about the relation between Europe and Cather's writing. Many critics have broached this subject, and most pay special attention to her fiction. While her fiction arguably exemplifies "travel" and provides a means by which we can measure how time spent in Europe is transferred onto the page, such an approach falls short of elucidating Cather's own analysis of Europe.⁷ Her impressions of the journey were recorded in fourteen largely ignored articles written for the *Nebraska State Journal*. These articles are the subject of this chapter. Rather than presenting England or France through a narrator or some other character and rather than

⁶ In addition to her 1902 trip to Europe, Cather traveled there in 1908, 1909, 1920, 1923, and 1935.

⁷ Klaus P. Stich reports that Cather had a "life-long fascination with the language, culture and history of the south of France—the Midi" and argues that *Death Comes for the Archbishop* reflects that interest and demonstrates her "contentment as a literary architect" (57). See "Cather's 'Midi Romanesque': Missionaries, Myth, and the Grail in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*." *Studies in the Novel* 38 (2006): 57-73. Loretta Wasserman is also interested in this connection between Europe and fiction, and she turns her attention to Cather's treatment of London in *Alexander's Bridge*. Focusing on certain "biographical details" of Cather's life, Wasserman attempts to show "that some part of Cather is embedded" in the novel and that her near decision to move to London influenced the portrayal of Bartley Alexander and his "agony of indecision" (3). See "*Alexander's Bridge*: The 'Other' First Novel." *Cather Studies* 4 (1999): 294+. Web. Tim Prchal thoughtfully examines how Cather's portrayal of Czechoslovakian immigrants in *My Antonia* acts as a "response to and reshaping of the popular image of Czech immigrants" (3). See "The Bohemian Paradox: *My Antonia* and Popular Images of Czech Immigrants." *MELUS* 29 (2004): 3-25. And, last but not least, the entirety of *Cather Studies* Volume 4 (1999), which is subtitled "Willa Cather's Canadian & Old World Connections," is devoted to the relation between Cather's fiction and Europe.

reducing these countries to setting and background, Cather's travel writing provides a first-hand view of Europe. Although her impressions are sometimes tinged with awe and anxiety and even laden with expressions of American pride and conventionalism, they are never blurred by fictive tropes. Tracking Cather's touristic responses to the European scene elucidates her anxiety, reveals how it affects her journey and her ability to write about travel, and points to a new way of analyzing travel and determining what constitutes a site.

Kates was the first to collect the articles in *Willa Cather in Europe: Her Own Story of the First Journey*, and he provides—and the term is his—an “incidental” analysis of the articles. Mining the text for material linked to Cather's fiction, Kates argues that the articles reveal Cather “slowly choosing” her “subject” and “setting,” as well as the “types of people she will write about” (x).⁸ Nichole Bennett-Bealer situates the articles within a larger body of travel writing and then traces how they “tell a story of Cather's development as an author” (1). Bennett-Bealer sees the articles as “small vignettes which provide intimate glimpses into” Cather's “first European encounter” (1). In a move away from this tendency to tie Cather's travel writing to her fiction, Charlotte Beyer focuses on how Cather “uses journalistic language to reflect on the encounter between America and Britain” (207). This chapter builds on the work of these critics. It examines how Cather conducts herself as a tourist and how her portrayal of Europe challenges conventional ways of writing about this particular space. Yet, my consideration of Cather's fiction and journalistic devices, rather than comprising the sum

⁸ Kates takes editorial liberties that interfere with the reader's ability to analyze the material. He revises Cather's punctuation and changes her Americanized spelling to British forms—e.g., color to colour, theater to theatre, king to King, and so on. Such alterations suggest that Cather is adopting a British style that is, by no means, supported by the original text, and the changes obscure Cather's intention at moments of special anxiety and unease.

of my analysis, represents only one part of a larger exploration of the anxiety that informed her first trip abroad.

Caroline Kirkland, in *Holidays Abroad; or Europe from the West*, claims that the American's "ideal of the mother country was made up from books—not to-day's books, but books hallowed by time, and sealed by the whole world's love and gratitude" (92). However, when Americans traveling to England arrive expecting to discover a nation "endowed" with "something of Shakespeare's universality" and with Milton's "dignity and independence," the result, quite frankly, is a shock to the traveler's system (93, 92). Despite this "mystification," to borrow Kirkland's word, most of these narratives adhere to a specific paradigm (92). They chronicle excursions to museums, cathedrals, and similar tourist attractions, and posit that touring the "Old World" will "furnish" the American traveler's "mind with new ideas, assist his study of mankind and their history, and increase his pleasure in literature, both poetry and prose, as well as develop his taste for art and music" ("Going" 587). Wharton and James, whose travel writing is often considered the pinnacle of the genre, reinforce this tradition of seeing Europe through a lens that focuses primarily on architecture, landscape, and art, and their travel narratives often exclude contemporary life and entirely ignore (or aestheticize) entire segments of the population.⁹

⁹ In *Italian Backgrounds*, Edith Wharton repeatedly situates farmers and peasants on an imagined stage, and she describes the night time events of a small village as a performance, with the inhabitants of the village taking on the roles of the chorus, actors, and spectators. Prior to her description, she confesses that the "scene changes" as evening approaches and that "the transformation is not unintentionally described in theatrical terms, since the square which, after sunset becomes the center of life at Splügen, has an absurd resemblance to a stage-setting" (9). This metaphor is extended through the end of the chapter, and it bespeaks Wharton's inability to see these individuals as they really are. Instead, she reinterprets them as art in an effort to fit them into a particular image of Europe. Wharton is not alone in the tendency to aestheticize the lower classes. Dreiser engages in similar practices in both *A Hoosier Holiday* (260, 278, 338) and in *A Traveler at Forty* (43). Additionally, Henry James, in *English Hours*, asserts that the "rough characters who are lying on their faces in the sheep-polluted grass" of Green Park suggest "rich

Cather's travel writing capsizes such traditions and challenges stereotypical portrayals of Europe. In describing the "boat-women" of London's canals ("Canal Folk" 903) and the "brave old peasant women" in Barbizon ("One Sunday" 931), by visiting Le Lavandou, a fishing village in the South of France with little recorded historical or cultural value, she emphasizes the lower classes and lesser-known locales in England and France. The result is an alternative image that de-centers conventional tourism and challenges the ways that Americans think about Europe. This chapter examines the English and French portions of her tour separately, but each section has a comparative element where Cather's approach to the act of touring and her subsequent portrayal of each country is analyzed. That pattern of organization reveals a dramatic divide between Cather's portrayal of urban England and rural France, and that becomes a recurring theme in the discussion. Still, the central issue is the relation between her European portrait and anxiety. This chapter analyzes that by considering how Cather's patriotism, cultural assumptions, and unease are revealed through her treatment of seemingly innocuous street scenes and people. At the same time, the discussion explores how social class and fears about such affect her experience, and it examines how historic spaces, guidebooks, and other travel narratives act as contentious voices that Cather must filter through as she struggles to comprehend Europe in her own terms.

possibilities. Their velveteen legs and their colossal high-lows, their purple necks and ear-tips, their knotted sticks and little greasy hats, make them look like stage-villains of realistic melodrama" (92). According to James, their "romantic attractiveness" stems from their hunger and deprivation, a comment that at once recognizes their plight, but minimizes it and reduces it to something purely aesthetic.

People and Anxiety in England

In *Certain Delightful English Towns*, William Dean Howells addresses the conviction that Americans are necessarily at home in England. Focusing on the historic, cultural, and ancestral ties between the two countries, Howells claims that: “No American, complexly speaking, finds himself in England for the first time, unless he is one of those many Americans who are not of English extraction” (233). Even if one has never set foot on English soil, Howells asserts, the American traveler “has that sense of having been there before” because “his English ancestors who really were once there stir within him, and his American forefathers, who were nourished on the history and literature of England, and were therefore intellectually English join forces in creating an English consciousness in him” (233).¹⁰ For Howells, there is an innate Englishness in Americans that supersedes genetics. The intangible, *herkunftian*, bonds of history, culture, and language that connect the two countries create a continuum that is always, already there. Cather has genetic and national ties to England; however, she neither affirms nor rejects any such connection in her travel writing.¹¹ She makes no attempt to theorize about how Americans feel in England, and she appears unwilling to acknowledge her role as a representative American abroad. However, her portrayal of England unmasks her patriotism and reveals a nationalistic desire to distance the two countries and transform traditional ways of characterizing England and America.

¹⁰ In *England: Picturesque and Descriptive Reminiscences of Foreign Travel*, Joel Cook similarly maintains that England “was the home of his forefathers; its history is to a great extent the history of his own country; and he is bound to it by the powerful ties of consanguinity, language, laws, and customs” (iii).

¹¹ Caroline Cather, Willa’s grandmother, was a descendent of Jeremiah Smith, an Englishman who, in 1730, immigrated to Back Creek Valley, Virginia. More than a generation later, in 1851, Willa Cather’s paternal grandparents took up residence near Back Creek, and Willa was born there in 1873. Jasper Cather, the first Cather to immigrate to America, was from Wales, and he settled in Western Pennsylvania during the mid-1700s.

Her first article, “First Glimpse of England,” recreates bustling street scenes and colorfully portrays Liverpool’s working class; however, it also exposes the anxiety induced by so suddenly and completely being immersed in a sea of English otherness. Because of the pending political events, Cather is plunged into a carnivalesque atmosphere of patriotic revelry where she witnesses spectacular displays of English nationalism. All around her are “canopies, arches and flags. From pillar to pillar along the sidewalks ran chains of paper roses for miles. Everywhere hung pictures of the king and queen” (“First Glimpse” 890). In the streets, she encounters “‘bobbies’ . . . lined up on the steps of St. George’s hall and a few redcoats with their caps perched at their favorite jaunty angle and short canes under their arms” (890). She is also intrigued by a “group of girls” selling “flowers at the foot of an equestrian statue of Queen Victoria, done in bronze by Thornycroft when the empress was a young woman” (890). According to Cather, their hair was “hanging loose over their shoulders,” and they had the “most strident voices imaginable” (890). In these early moments, Cather foregrounds those hackneyed sights, sounds, and symbols that are characteristically and stereotypically English.

Cather also fixates on the ubiquity of the “Union Jack”—which was “everywhere”—and she watches as it “fluttered and tugged in the wind” (“First Glimpse” 890).¹² Such attention to the flag is not unusual. Julia Clark Hallam, in *The Story of a*

¹² An article entitled “The President in Pittsburgh,” written for the *Courier* and dated 27 November 1897, documents the events surrounding William McKinley’s tour through Pittsburgh and stands as a stark contrast to Cather’s portrayal of Liverpool. In the *Courier* piece, Cather celebrates these moments when “a big city relaxes itself . . . and all the diversified and antagonistic interests of half a million people are for the moment forgotten and a common enthusiasm makes men akin indeed” (518). Unlike the barely-veiled patriotism that is injected into her England articles, here, Cather repeatedly refers to the “transcendent passion of patriotism” (518, 521). She honors the soldiers, who were “everywhere” (517), and she revels in the patriotic spirit of the parade and concert that the “restless crowd,” in their zeal, barely even acknowledged (519).

European Tour, remembers spending July 4, 1901 aboard an “English ship,” and she feels an overwhelming rush of emotion upon realizing that the American flag is not there. As she put it, “I shall never forget the entirely unlooked for feeling of remonstrance which filled me when I discovered that it was not ‘Old Glory’ which was waving over me” (Hallam 2-3). Overwhelmed by the absence of the red, white, and blue, Hallam is compelled to inject her narrative with hearty doses of what may be thought of as “Americanisms,” those overt displays of national pride often found in travel writing by American tourists. At one point Hallam even confesses, “I was so homesick that I could hardly speak of my own country without choking” (Hallam 309). No such throat-clenching commentary exists in Cather’s articles, and her initial portrait is marked by stoicism or what some might consider objective journalistic reporting. Although she momentarily harnesses her patriotism, Cather’s anxiety and national pride become evident when she turns her focus away from the coronation events. In what can be interpreted as an attempt to gain a sense of control amid the pressing display of British nationalism, she berates the English crowds for lacking what she calls American “neatness” (“First Glimpse” 890). According to Cather, the “American idea of neatness, of being genuine as far as you go, of having little and having it good, which at home even the shop girls imbibe more or less of, prevails not at all here” (891). She forthrightly confesses that: “Constant comparisons are the stamp of the foreigners; one continually translates manners and customs of a new country into the terms of his own before he can fully comprehend them” (892). However, such self-awareness does not prevent Cather from repeatedly asserting that there is “nothing of the smartness and neatness and trimness of an American crowd” in this sea of British revelers (890).

For years, cultural assumptions about English orderliness had persisted. Washington Irving compared “English scenery” with “ideas of order, of quiet, of sober, well-established principles, of hoary usage and reverend custom” (61). Emerson called England a “polished country” (109) and depicted the English people as “positive, methodical, cleanly, and formal, loving routine and conventional ways; loving truth and religion, to be sure, but inexorable on points of form” (110-11).¹³ Taking a decidedly anti-stereotypical stand against such notions, Cather suggests that neatness is the definitive American trait and posits that the English are disorderly, slovenly, and abrasive. In Liverpool, she observes that the “square as a whole presented a beautiful variation of line and color, but the majority of the individuals who made up these dark splotches on the yellow plane were far from lovely,” a remark that relegates British patriotism to the background and refigures the British as ugly and uncouth (“First Glimpse” 890). Such commentary shifts one’s attention away from the coronation festivities and places America at the center of attention. Moreover, without conspicuous references to her own patriotism, Cather firmly situates herself in this ideal of American orderliness that flies in the face of all previous characterizations.¹⁴ The shift in focus allows Cather to redirect her anguish, moving it away from the symbols that represent English nationalism and towards the participants themselves. This repositioning suggests

¹³ The practice of identifying England by its orderliness continued long after Cather’s 1902 tour. Theodore Dreiser celebrates the “established order of England” and consistently refers to the English as “orderly” in *A Traveler at Forty* (14). Likewise, Edmund Wilson, writing in 1947, perpetuates assumptions about the orderliness of England and its ways. His opening comments read: “The English way of getting things done is quite distinct from the American way. It is quieter, more orderly, politer” (3). See Wilson’s *Europe without Baedeker: Sketches Among the Ruins of Italy, Greece and England, With Notes from a Diary of 1963-64: Paris, Rome, Budapest*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966.

¹⁴ Such a turn in focus is surprising, especially since the newspapers in America had been covering the days leading up to June 26, 1902 in painstaking detail and since the postponement of the much-anticipated coronation likewise filled newspaper pages. See *The New York Tribune*, June 15, 1902 and Herbert Welch’s “England’s Great disappointment.” *Christian Advocate*. 24 July 1902. 1178.

a type of psychological displacement where one transfers attention away from something threatening to something else that is perceived to be a safer alternative.¹⁵

These descriptions of the street scene make transparent Cather's anxiety-induced tendency of measuring a scene, not for its own value, but against an idealized American image. Two weeks later, in "Seeing Things in London," Cather examines London's East End and continues to judge the English against this same rather opaque standard of "neatness." When describing English shop girls, Cather asserts that there is "nothing at all at home to correspond to her," and she claims that they possess "absolutely nothing of the neatness and trimness which characterize our working girls at home" (909).

According to Cather, their attire is marked by "unspeakable griminess. She wears flowers and paste jewels, but she seldom bathes, never has enough hair pins and considers tooth brushes necessary only for members of the royal family" (909). That Cather repeatedly turns to "neatness" as her standard of measure exposes the degree of her anxiety.

Admittedly, it is a flimsy mode of comparison, yet it represents Cather's baseline. She confesses that these girls work, occasionally go to church, and attend "the better theatres, when she has come out with one of her chums with the purpose of being both elegant and intellectual" (909). However, the description borders on condescending, and her language reduces these young women to objects of speculation and posits them as a seedy counterpart to America's own working-class girls. She either cannot or will not recognize their humanity, and she mockingly dismisses their attempts to obtain culture and improve their lives.

In the same way, Cather's descriptions of Liverpool's poor ultimately serve a comparative function and insinuate America's superiority. Shortly after arriving in

¹⁵ For more on displacement, see Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

England, she “went to see the poor of Liverpool fed at St. George’s Hall, just across the street [from where she and McClung were lodging]. The lord mayor and lord mayoress had arranged to dine all the worthy aged poor there in honor of the new king’s ascent to the throne” (“First Glimpse” 891). Watching the “guests,” who “seemed worn to the bone, some of them and all of them had had a sixty years’ tussle with poverty in a land where the competition is exceedingly close,” Cather acknowledges the hopelessness of their situation (892). But then, she makes a comment that oddly suggests that she is glad to find such suffering here. She claims that: “There are so many thoroughly engaging and attractive things about English life and people, that it is not a little satisfaction to be able to say to one’s self that in no American city could be nurtured such an array of poverty and decrepitude as filed into St. George’s hall that holiday” (892). Such back-handed compliments stem from idealized notions rather than facts about America. And, despite the assertion concerning America’s supposed lack of economic hardship, Cather is surely well aware that it does exist in America. Even if she had not read Jacob Riis’s *How the Other Half Lives*, an 1890 text that unflinchingly documents the horrific living conditions of New York City’s tenements, by 1902, Cather had traveled to New York City and Chicago and had lived in Pittsburgh for six years. There was no shortage of financial deprivation or depravity in any of these cities, but these realities do not find their way into her travel writing. Instead, she whitewashes such actualities, a decision likely precipitated by anxiety and which suggests both an impulse to visualize an America where equality reigns and the poor are invisible and a desire to posit America as the anti-England.

In *A Traveler at Forty*, Theodore Dreiser employs a similar tactic when he details his foray into London's East End, a "dull, sordid, poor-bodied world" where "any depth of filth or crime might be reached" (135). As he wanders through the streets, Dreiser is struck by the eerie silence and a palpable sense of hopelessness. The streets were "peculiarly quiet" and "almost empty" except where in "low doors and areaways oozed occasional figures who were either thin, or shabby, or dirty, or sickly, but a crowd was not visible anywhere" (129). He claims that he "could sense all forms of abuse and distress here" and concludes that "[l]ife, in its farthest reaches, sinks to a sad ugly mess and stays there" (131). Thinking of home, however, Dreiser maintains that there is "no voiceless degradation that I have ever seen in America," and he asserts that New York City's East Side is "unquestionably one of the noisiest spots in the world, if not the worst. It is so full of children—so full of hope too" (129). Characterizing New York's East Side by its energy, Dreiser posits a dynamic portrait of American poverty that reinforces sentiments of America's superiority by taking things to their most absurd level: even our poverty is better.

Dreiser is lured to the East End three times because he had heard of this particular section as "grim, doleful, a center and sea of depraved and depressed life" (128). And, he is clearly titillated by the possibility of witnessing certain "East End amusements—calf-eating contests, canary-singing contests, whiffet races, pigeon-eating contests" (128). Dreiser's repeated visits to the East End, along with his desire to gaze upon such grotesque spectacles, reveal his comprehension of this space as a tourist site. He comes here for the sheer pleasure of looking at something that exists outside of his everyday experience. Cather is not tempted by such crude past times; nonetheless, she is drawn to

the area, and there is an element of spectacle in her observance as well. She recalls that she and McClung “spent morning after morning on High Holborn or the Strand, watching this never-ending procession” of London’s “working-folk” (“Seeing Things” 907). Her intense interest could stem from a desire to expose social injustice or even a desire to view the scene as an artist in search of inspiration à la Dreiser.¹⁶ However, Cather’s silence on these matters makes it difficult to see her commentary as political, artistic, or ideological. Perhaps one could argue that she visits the area to fulfill her journalistic duties and one could posit that her reporting is objective, though her disparaging tone thoroughly eliminates the possibility that Cather is a dispassionate observer. Wondering if “all the failures of this generation, the world over, have been suddenly swept into London” because the “streets are a restless, breathing, malodorous pageant of the seedy of all nations,” Cather contradicts Dreiser’s image of a quiet East End (907). And her parade of “common people; small tradesmen, shop girls, clerks, people who go a-shopping with slender purses, young men who aspire to be men of fashion on small salaries” represents an enticing display that undermines the mythical orderliness of London (907).¹⁷

Like Victor Morse and Claude Wheeler of *One of Ours*, characters who want to see “a city that’s alive,” Cather finds the allure of London’s contemporary culture far more compelling than the museums that most American tourists flock to (323). However, these same scenes act as a source of anxiety that reduce Cather to a silent spectator. Her

¹⁶ Dreiser confesses that he is drawn to such scenes because of their aesthetic value to him as a writer. See *A Traveler at Forty* pp. 41-43.

¹⁷ Perhaps the difference in these East End portraits is due to their exact location. Dreiser tours Whitechapel as well as “all that region which lies between there and the Great Eastern Railway Station and Bethnal Green and Shoreditch” (129). This is the same area that Jack London writes about in *The People of the Abyss*. Cather, however, avoids Whitechapel altogether. She and McClung choose as their refuge a hotel on King Street in “a part of the city near Russell and Mecklenberg squares or about the British Museum” (54), an area Cather describes as a “common but so-called respectable part of town” (55).

“pilgrimages” to the “so-called respectable part of the town” often result in her “merely watching the procession with perplexity” (“Seeing Things” 907). So determined is she to escape conventional London that she and McClung lodge in a “comfortable and satisfactory little hotel, patronized chiefly by folk from the country who come to town to do their modest shopping, on King Street, off Cheapside” (907). In this part of London, they are far removed from the trendier West End. According to Cather, they chose this area because they “wished to be in the heart of the old City of London, within walking distance of the Tower, Old Bailey and the Temple” (907). Yet, she confesses that the “living city and not the dead one has kept us here and the hard, garish ugly mask of the immediate present drags one’s attention quite away from the long past it covers” (907). Cather’s assertion that her “attention” is dragged toward the spectacle of suffering and debauchery suggests that her emphasis on these things is compulsory—not her own choice—and the reference to the “mask of the immediate present” implies that the vulgarities of 1902 London are merely a façade, not the “real” London. Such remarks soften the blow of her critique and indicate a desire to see a more conventional London. However, her own portrait constantly belies these claims. Through her atypical descriptions, Cather masks the stereotypical London that tourists traditionally want to see, and she suggests that these *other* scenes are far more intriguing than the ancient Tower and other catalogued tourist sites.

Although Cather refuses to fill her pages with scenes of the historic London that so many travelers write about, she does not entirely omit that type of material from her narrative. In an article entitled “The Kensington Studio,” she chronicles her tour of Sir Edward Burne-Jones’s studio, though it was later discovered that the entire account had

been fictionalized.¹⁸ In the article's introduction, Cather narrates the sights along the way to the studio and remarks that the "beautiful surfaces and the beautiful life of London lie from Trafalgar square westward through St. James's park and Hyde park, along Piccadilly, through Kensington to Hammersmith" (912). She admires "the glorious green of the parks and the bold white of the club houses along Piccadilly" (912). She marvels at the "broad asphalts of Kensington that are covered, or rather dusted, with a yellow sand that catches the sunlight like gold powder, lying bright between their lines of elm and plane trees" (912). The scene is conspicuously absent of people, and there is only the physical setting: the sunlight, the "tall hawthorn bushes," and the "gardens" of "brick houses" (912, 913). The wretchedness of Fleet Street and Cheapside has been left behind, and this scene stands out as one of Cather's rare depictions of England's conventional beauty. But Cather makes no comments beyond these superficial descriptions. From here, the article narrates a fallacious trip to Burne-Jones's studio.

That the only work among her travel articles set outside of London's underprivileged areas and which emphasizes the modern moment is fictionalized, that it lacks any suggestion of an effort or a desire to explore the area, and that her writing from England perennially evokes the country's dark underbelly reiterates the depth of Cather's anxiety and may even imply a motive. The previous comment from "Seeing Things in London" implies that Cather is aware of this pattern, that she knows that she is focusing on things that dismantle and challenge common representations of London. Despite the implied desire to represent the city more conventionally, her persistent focus on ugliness and suffering transforms London's existing ethos as a city of culture and quaint manners into something entirely antipodal to general perceptions. By highlighting the unsavory

¹⁸ See Bennett, Mildred R. *The World of Willa Cather*. Nebraska: U of Nebraska P, 1961, esp. pg 249.

elements of contemporary English society, Cather forces a reconsideration of the ancient city. This is more than simply playing the iconoclast. She sees two Londons: the idealized historical city that exists in travel guides and narratives and the twentieth-century urban space of suffering and injustice. By focusing her attention on the latter, Cather demands a negotiation of these seemingly incompatible aspects of the city. Rather than following in the footsteps of those who came before her, Cather rejects the idealizing gaze and constructs another portrait that emphasizes the human conditions rather than the architecture of the city.

At the same time, Cather's unease may stem from recognizing something too-familiarly American in the behavior of England's lower classes. Riis had already reported that thousands of children living in New York City's tenement housing had "drunken parents" (207), that one "drunken father" of the same area had "turned" his eight and ten-year-old sons "out to beg, or steal, or starve," and that such children often received "blows and curses for breakfast, dinner, and supper" (200). The violent degeneracy that Riis finds in New York's tenements is no less scandalous or pitiable than what Cather encounters in London. It may be those similarities that foment such anxiety for Cather. Seeing these realities in London could remind her that, despite her best attempt to deny the facts, things back home are no different, and her harsh treatment of the poor in England could be a projection of her distress over the same class of people at home.

Or, perhaps Cather was hoping to escape such realities on this tour, perhaps she wanted to experience the mythological England that exists in popular travel narratives. Seeing these truths irreparably damages the construct, or the illusion, of England and makes it impossible for her to see the country, especially London, any other way. Thus,

when she sees throngs of men “pouring can after can of liquor down their throats,” Cather alleges that the “London working folk” are “an absolutely gin soaked people” (907, 908). When she turns her attention to a “man, fairly well clad and looking the prosperous workman” walking with his wife and infant child, Cather seemingly finds a scene of sweet domesticity among the depravity. Yet, the man is “drunken,” and Cather hears him “cursing” his wife “with a richness and variety of phrase leaving one breathless, and no one pays the least attention to him” (908). The sweetness of the moment shatters, along with her already battered illusions of England, and these sharp-tongued descriptions challenge perceptions and reveal her constant disenchantment with the Mother Country. Whether such anxiety-inducing scenes actually *impose* or “drag” themselves into the narrative or whether Cather consciously determines to write in this most unflattering way about England, she consistently signifies it through these negative characterizations of the poor and working class and posits a fresh, albeit tattered, portrait of the country that Washington Irving once called “the land of wonders” (3).

Cather’s articles from rural France often foreground the same issues—the family and alcohol consumption—but rather than underscoring discord, the articles celebrate family unity and reveal dramatically different perceptions of alcohol. As she walks along a French country road, Cather confesses that she is briefly “startled . . . at hearing a rollicking drinking song” (“One Sunday” 933). Soon, though, she discovers that the singers, though inebriated, consisted of “a bourgeois papa, his white waistcoat on; mamma stout and puffing as she plodded, her skirts held up under her elbow, and half a dozen sons and daughters, who were singing for joy of life and companionship” (933). Such glimpses of family unity and playfulness contrast sharply with incidents in England,

where children escort their drunken mothers and fathers through the streets and where alcohol serves as a tool of rebellion. Cather claims that “the one institution which you could never get away from in France” is the “family” and, although she is surrounded by families in England, the absence of joy, the turmoil of everyday life, and the struggle for survival weaken familial bonds and undermine the family unit (933). For Cather, scenes of French domesticity and such simplistic ways of life evoke scenes from Daudet, Dumas, and Jean Francios Millet. In other words, she aestheticizes these scenes and interprets them as an artist. But in England, her insistence on centering the poor in her narrative challenges stereotypical ways of seeing the country and disrupts the English ethos constructed in conventional travel narratives.

There are additional scenes from France that likewise demonstrate Cather’s unflinching acceptance of behavior that, in England, would have prompted further castigation. When she travels to Hyeres and unexpectedly finds herself “at the dock yards of La Seyne, a little shipping town out on the Mediterranean, late at night, with no train leaving for our destination for three hours” (“Country” 940), the level of her anxiety is remarkably diminished when compared to her experiences in England. Cather is stranded “in the heart” of the sailors’ housing, a locale that necessarily evokes scenes of raucous behavior and abrasiveness. While she admits that “dozens of perplexing expletives” fell upon her ears and the thought “occurred” to her that “friends at home would be alarmed if they knew that we were standing in the middle of the sailors’ quarter . . . quite alone,” her general tone implies that this is a grand adventure (940). And in her fiction, Cather also treats intoxication among Continental immigrants with a light hand. In *The Song of the Lark*, when Thea Kronborg witnesses drunkenness among Polish workers in

Packingtoun, she hypothesizes that their inebriation stems from a desire for “beauty,” and she claims that “in Packingtoun there is no place to get it except at the saloons, where one can buy for a few hours the illusion of comfort, hope, love,--whatever one most longs for” (197-98). Drunkenness, rough language, lower classes, and the threat associated with being a woman in an all-male territory characterize the real incident in La Seyne and the fictional event Chicago, yet neither Cather nor Thea express lasting apprehension or condemnation in these moments. Thea rationalizes the behavior of the Polish workers and is emboldened after being awakened to the bleak desperation and ugliness that surrounds her. Cather similarly compares the rough sailors that she encounters to “the chorus of a light opera,” and she even calls them “a fine tableau” (“Country” 940). Such calm acceptance, when compared to the menacing portrait of the English poor and working classes, suggests a chasm in Cather’s perception of England and France that is only partially located in perceptions of family life and cultural attitudes toward alcohol consumption and a desire to undermine conventional portrayals of abroad. This issue surrounding the English-French divide in Cather’s travel writing will resurface in this chapter but, for now, I turn to two topics merely hinted at in this section but which underlie everything here: gender and class.

Class and Disfigured Womanhood

Throughout her tour, Cather repeatedly turns her eye towards women and, in many of her articles, as in her fiction, women are the center around which everything else revolves. Her descriptions of these women shed light on how Cather measures womanhood and show how anxiety and patriotism can be channeled through the

discourse of gender and class.¹⁹ Turning her attention toward middle-class English women, Cather focuses on their physical attributes—their bodies and clothing—and her descriptions often reinforce their weakness and emphasize their lowly position in English society. After having been in the country for a week, Cather observes that she has “not seen one English woman or girl of the middle class who is not stoop-shouldered to a painful degree, or who does not stand with her chest sunk in and the lower part of the torso thrust forward” (“First Glimpse” 891). She concludes that their “unfortunate carriage is so universal that it amounts to a national disfigurement among the women” (891). Such commentary nationalizes the broken bodies of these women, and Cather appears to sympathize with them at first. The image of an entire class of hunched-over women, appearing almost apelike in their posture, intimates their burdens and reveals their hardship. However, Cather does not do social work in these articles. She makes no postulations about their lives, and she defines them primarily through their deformity. Mary Suzanne Schriber has observed that when American women describe other women in non-Western countries, the portrait is characteristically derogatory and the emphasis on difference often “produces more disgust than empathy or sympathy” for the plight of less-fortunate women (85). Such disparaging descriptions serve to protect the traveler’s sense of self and separate her from these *other* women, whom she does not really consider to be women at all.

¹⁹ Bennett-Bealer argues that Cather’s arrival in Liverpool during the coronation celebration provides a “unique opportunity to write of a momentous occasion, or more accurately, the failure of a momentous occasion,” yet “Cather disappoints us by emphasizing such a seemingly inconsequential element” (73). Cather’s comments on English women may at first seem prosaic and could be seen as disappointing if one approaches these articles in search of commentary regarding a specific event or expecting a reassertion of conventional travel writing. However, that these women of the lower and middle classes comprise such a significant part of her commentary reveals that they are far from “inconsequential,” and Cather’s attention to their lives and bodies provides vital information about the expectations, ideologies, and anxieties that informed her sense of self as an American traveler.

When Kate Field toured Europe in 1872 and chronicled her travels in *Hap Hazard*, she interrogated English society for forcing its bachelorettes into what she perceived as an unjust “submission” (250). Charging that single “women in Europe are suppressed to an intolerable extent,” Field even calls the ideology that permits such repression “idiotic,” and she takes it as her duty to “break chains, even were I European” (249, 250). By contrast, even though Cather proclaims that she is “always perfectly sure that men are mauling women with their fists or battering them up with furniture just around the corner” in London’s East End, she admits that she is “no voice of an oppressed sex crying aloud” (“Seeing Things” 908). She never uses her travel articles as a platform for women’s rights, and she suggests that these women are, at least in part, responsible for their situations. According to Cather, they “drink their share” (908). Such commentary makes the women complicit in their degradation and challenges those who would call them victims.

But Cather’s descriptions of these women go much further than that. When she describes the attire of English working class women, her tone becomes unsympathetic and even condescending, and she ties their physical appearance to their inability to perform even the most basic womanly duties. In America, women were viewed according to the standards of “True Womanhood,” an ideological system that measured women by their adherence to a “role bounded by kitchen and nursery, overlaid with piety and purity, and crowned with subservience” (Smith-Rosenberg 13). In England, Cather evokes these same standards as she describes women of the lower and middle classes. Asserting that their “dress is almost as remarkable” as their posture, Cather complains that the “streets” of Liverpool “are always full of badly made, home concocted silks and satins and lawns

and dimities. No shirtwaist is complete without a daub of penny lace on it, no skirt is correct unless it trails in the back, is too short in the front and is a cascade of dragged ruffles and flounces” (“First Glimpse” 891). On one hand, such comments mock the dress-making abilities of these women, and Cather’s words represent a rather weak and transparent attempt to denigrate one group in order to reaffirm her own sense of self. But on another level, the comments assault the womanhood of England’s middle class women. The work is sloppy, tasteless, and cheap and so, it is implied, are the women who wear these dresses. Even worse than their poor dress-making skills are their hats, which Cather claims “are something beyond belief.”

Hats have never at all been one of the vexing problems of my life, but indifferent as I am, these render me speechless. I should think a well taught and tasteful American milliner would go mad in England and eventually hang herself with bolts of green and scarlet ribbon—the favorite color combination in Liverpool. (891)

Cather’s evocation of self-inflicted violence suggests her apprehension and, although she claims to be “indifferent,” she is hardly so. Her descriptions not only point to the failure of these individuals to look like women, but they also imply the idealized group that Cather identifies with: a homogenous class of American women living in a land of perfectly formed hats, dresses, and bodies. In that perfect land, everyone meets the standard. At the same time, the subtle assertion of her own superiority and the postulation that this environment would be fatal to an “American milliner” distances Cather from these *other* women, preserves her nationalistic ideals of womanhood, and utterly rejects any type of bond between these two groups of women—cultural, historical, or otherwise.

But there is more to Cather's portrait of England's lower and middle-class women than their failure to look like true women. The underlying factor in all of this resides in Cather's distress over class difference. It is, as Schriber points out: "the unspoken, the unspeakable, but the most powerful component in the 'othering' of women in other lands" (86). Class is central to Cather's perception of these women, and her attention to their shabby appearance draws attention to their lack of means and, conversely, emphasizes Cather's privilege as a professional American woman of both money and leisure. Her disparaging commentary and attention to such trifling things as their style of clothes and millinery, when juxtaposed with her own social set and subject position (American, journalist, middle class, teacher) serves to "heighten class difference and trivialize and dismiss the conditions in which [these] women live," to borrow Schriber's wording (85). While many American women, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, Kate Field, and Lucy Seaman Bainbridge traveled abroad, explored the lives and living conditions of other women, and wrote about it in an effort to ameliorate injustice, Cather's portrayals of lower class British women serve no such purpose.²⁰ She relinquishes social responsibility and, instead, casts an anxiety-laden, class-based gaze on these women and then creates a portrait that further marginalizes them and denies their womanhood.

Cather's portrayal of English women and her forays into London's East End indicates how travel permits a fluidity of movement through both space and social class. The journey is not merely horizontal across landscapes, but also vertical, as the traveler moves rather freely up and down the social ladder.²¹ Such vertical movement forces

²⁰ See Stowe's *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands* (1854), Kate Field's *Hap-Hazard* (1883), and Lucy Seaman Bainbridge's *Round-the-World Letters* (1882).

²¹ This same vertical movement can be observed in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands*, Theodore Dreiser's *A Traveler at Forty*, and Henry James's *The American Scene*.

encounters with individuals and groups that the traveler would not typically interact with and, as the traveler becomes more conscious of the social hierarchy and witnesses at least some of the realities of life at the different rungs of the ladder, anxiety is often the result. In Cather's case, the coronation, royalty, the aristocracy, and the moneyed, along with her own assumptions about England, saturate the landscape and support the stereotypical image of England that so many Americans subscribe to. However, that version of reality is challenged by the presence of the lower classes. It is a scene unlike anything in America, and travel guides and other narratives do little to prepare one for the scene. The women, in particular, are simultaneously compelling and threatening. Thus, Cather's rendering of them serves a dual purpose. First, by creating a spectacle of these women, Cather performs an act of nationalistic self-preservation that reaffirms American womanhood and posits her fellow American women as the standard. Secondly, the disparaging portrayals of these women place a safe distance between Cather and the female English other—and perhaps the female *American* other—who represents what *could* happen if Cather (or any American woman of means) experienced financial ruin. At the same time, the distance allows her to analyze them and, perhaps, ponder their lives, while not losing *herself* or her “I” in their world and circumstances.²²

Issues of class, gender, and the vertical nature of travel are likewise important in Cather's portrayal of the canal workers. Less than a month into her English tour, Cather wrote an article that described a group she would later call “The Strangest Tribe of

²² Schriber suggests that female American travelers can “see” themselves “all too well in women of the lower orders. She is able to see in “them” her worst nightmare. She counters her fear by underscoring ‘their’ difference simultaneously magnifying and securing her superior place” (*Writing Home* 89).

Darkest England,” the families who live and work in the canals.²³ In “The Canal Folk of England,” Cather chronicles her closest encounter with a group that is simultaneously inside and outside of English society, and the article represents her most thorough and troubling portrayal of England’s working class women, their families, and ways of life. Cather discovers the “canal people” in Chester when she “came accidentally upon that part of the canal which runs under the Northgate street bridge, at the bottom of a cut seventy-five feet deep in the solid rock” (902, 903). Gazing down upon “these long gondolas of trade,” she sees “brown, foreign looking men and women eating their dinner on top of the dug-out cabin” (903, 904). After dinner, they “rinsed the dishes off in the canal” (904). The commentary records the most pedestrian of all events—family dinner—yet the observance of skin color, the assertion of foreignness, and the primitive dishwashing method suggests a subversion of the conventional family. Cather calls them “a peculiar sect of people, an element in the British working classes little heard of outside of England” and uses language (“peculiar” and “element”) that insinuates difference and separateness (902). According to Cather, at one time, they:

were Englishmen, with all the earmarks of the British working man. They have become a solitary and peculiar people who have not their like in the world, an Englishman only in his speech. He is a sort of half-land, half-water gypsy, a vagabond who manages to keep within the trace of labor, a tramp of one road, the best paid and worst nourished manual laborer in the kingdom. (902-03)

Such characterizations suggest that the canal workers are not only beyond the bounds of Englishness, but that they have also evolved into an entirely different, and lesser, species.

²³ The article appeared under this title in the *Pittsburgh Gazette* on 31 August 1902.

According to Cather, there is no place for them in society, for they are a group of frightening half-breeds who fit in neither on land nor water.

Throughout the article, Cather documents the work and home life of the canal workers, and she appears particularly interested in the lives of the “boat-women” (904). But her portrayal is far from objective, as she once again evokes the standards of true womanhood and depends upon middle-class ideologies as her subtext. Cather indicates that the canal woman performs her duties on board “with half a dozen children clinging to her skirts” and “does what housekeeping can be done in a box six feet by five and just high enough to stand in” (“Canal Folk” 903). However, this rush of womanly activity is tinged by the reality of canal life. These women also have responsibilities that require them to perform manly duties. Cather reports that: “These women are quite as good boatmen as their husbands, and take the more difficult of the two principal tasks, managing the tiller while their husbands follow the towpaths,” a comment that speaks to the physicality of these women and delicately balances them on the line between feminine and masculine (903). In “One Sunday at Barbizon,” Cather writes admirably of “brown, merry old women who . . . can outstrip their own sons and grandsons in the harvest field” and who, at the end of the day, sit “on the wooden door steps, singing tired children to sleep” (931). In *My Ántonia*, too, Cather writes of Ántonia Shimerda, who “did the work of a man on the farm” but who is also “a natural-born mother” (234, 236). While Cather’s characterizations of the Barbizonian women and Ántonia celebrate their motherliness, honor their moral fiber, and boast about their physical vitality, her descriptions of London’s canal women do not strike the same balance, and the commentary too often dehumanizes these women and portrays them as nearly barbaric.

For example, they live out their days in a “cave-like” cabin and, at bedtime, “neither she nor her husband undress when they go to bed at night, but kick off their shoes, wearing their clothing as faithfully as an animal does his fur” (“Canal Folk” 903). Moreover, Cather makes allegations about the immorality of these women. She claims that they like to “get pleasantly tipsy” and lazily lounge on the boat “without any feeling of responsibility,” something that they do “as soon as the children are old enough to be pressed into service” (904). They “have neither the consolation of education nor religion. Not one in a hundred can read, and they are the most frank and unabashed of pagans” (905). What’s more, this cycle of life seems inescapable. Their daughters “can not endure steady work or in-door life”; she insists on marrying “the boatman’s lad who beat her with his fist when she was a little girl and who will beat her with his fists again, and her children after her” (906). Such a lifestyle flies in the face of conventional ideals of family, responsibility, and morality. Drunken, violent, uneducated, and lacking in religious fortitude, the very presence of the canal people damages existing stereotypes of England and elevates the American sense of superiority.

Writing about “The Canal Folk of England,” Kates champions Cather as a “young observer” who “imaginatively sinks herself into the whole course of their lives,” and he refers to her as one who “proceeds with gusto” (36). “We can fairly see her at work,” Kates writes, a “young journalist, asking strings of questions, avid for information about the curious barges, the whole existence of men and women who live on them. Factually she takes it all in, putting it here to paper. This is a new and unexpected subject quite to her taste” (Kates 36). Bennett-Bealer similarly suggests that Cather’s article on the canal people is “a simple report of the way of life of these women,” and she argues that the

article lacks “any embellishments” (98). According to Bennett-Bealer, Cather “merely looks upon canal life with a journalist’s intentions of observation. Her informative presentation belies any personal response she may have had to the boat people” (98-99). While we appreciate Cather’s enthusiasm, it is prudent to caution against such simplistic acceptances of her reporting. Cather writes from a position of privilege, and she uses her journalistic authority to create a scene that, in the end, further denigrates and objectifies the poor, undermines the English ethos, and re-defines the American character.

David Spurr has suggested that journalists possess a “commanding view,” which “offers aesthetic pleasure on one hand, information and authority on the other” (15). Although Spurr’s study focuses on journalism in a colonial setting, it is nonetheless useful in this analysis because of the obvious power differential between Cather, the mobile American journalist, and the canal workers. According to Spurr, the “combination of pleasure and power” afforded by the “commanding view” plays a “special role” in journalism because it “conveys a sense of mastery over the unknown and over what is often perceived by the Western writer as strange and bizarre” (15). Cather’s portrayal of the canal people exposes how she uses journalism as a tool for confronting and mastering the *other*, especially in moments of anxiety. This ability to write the narrative of a “tribe,” her word, and to interpret it according her own standards provides a path for her to, figuratively speaking, put them in their place and reaffirm her own superiority. As Spurr puts it, because the “organization and classification of things takes place according to the writer’s own system of value,” the “relations of power inherent in the larger system of order” are therefore sustained (16, 17).

Finally, Cather's articles on the canal workers and other members of the poor and working classes in England serve as a key indicator of how anxiety creates an ambition to rupture conventional perceptions of England. That Cather includes the poor of England is, in and of itself, unremarkable. Nearly every American traveler to England acknowledges the wretched existence of the underprivileged there and theorizes about their existence. In *A Traveler at Forty*, Dreiser wonders if "under more general socialistic conditions" circumstances in the East End "would be better" (133). "Perhaps," he imagines, "under truer socialism . . . public wash-houses would not be necessary at all" (133). Such meditations add a political element to Dreiser's commentary and suggest that his journeys to the East End serve an ideological purpose. Henry James, in *English Hours*, concludes that "the impression of suffering is a part of the general vibration; it is one of the things that mingle with all the others to make the sound that is supremely dear to the consistent London-lover—the rumble of the tremendous human mill" (18). But James's use of painterly language demonstrates how he aestheticizes the poor, and his word choice—"impression"—minimizes their suffering, making it seem somehow less real. It is only an "impression." Moreover, neither Dreiser's nor James's narratives suggest that the poor characterize England; their presence is one aspect of a much larger picture.

But Cather only describes the poor and deprived, and her descriptions vibrate with the "grimness" of life ("First Glimpse" 890). While Dreiser and James theorize about the poor, Cather's portrayal of this same group imitates cultural anthropology. She includes an analysis of the life cycles of the canal workers, the narration of their living conditions, and the confession that, in St. James Park, she "counted the women lying

shelterless, flat on the ground, in poses which passed belief, dead to the world” (“Seeing Things” 908). Cather does not attempt to theorize about the poor or aestheticize their condition or even portray them with a sympathetic eye; rather, she explores their kinship and family life, social and gender relations, their religion (or lack thereof), and their ways of everyday living. Few American travelers to England, save Jack London, had written so prolifically and, indeed, so transformatively about these groups.²⁴ And Cather continues to write anthropologically as she journeys through France. In her article “In the Country of Daudet,” she takes as her subject the people of Arles rather than the architecture and Culture. She notes that “three generations and many servants live” communally in the “stone farm houses” and reports that:

The word of the master is the only law needed; the women sit down to meat only after the men are served. When a child is born, his godmother stands at the four corners of his bed holding salt, bread, eggs, and wine; if he have always enough of those, this is quite enough to wish for him.

(948)

Cather’s hypercritical commentary in England reveals her uncertainty, exposes an effort to master the situation and/or to ensure herself of her own (and America’s) superiority, and serves as a means of re-identifying England. By contrast, her portrait of France indicates the desire to connect to this rural lifestyle and commemorate French traditions and ways of life. Despite the conspicuous absence of anxiety, the anthropological style of reporting persists, and Cather’s emphasis on traditions, gender-related conventions governing the home, and the emphasis on home life itself represents an extraordinary departure from stereotypical presentations of Europe and its people.

²⁴ See Jack London’s *The People of the Abyss*. New York: MacMillan, 1903.

Cathedrals, Castles, and Carnage

Travel writing by Americans, whether abroad or within the United States, reveals the dramatic allure of the past. Narratives about English travel, in particular, portray history-hungry Americans moving eagerly from one museum, castle, or cathedral to another in an effort to accumulate experiences at famed sites and to somehow capture the essence of the Old World. James's *English Hours* exemplifies such narratives and conveys his belief that the past lives on in these sites, not as mere memory, but as something tangible that resonates in the present moment. In London, as he gazes upon a statue of Queen Anne at St. Paul's, James contends that, at that moment: "All history appeared to live again, and the continuity of things to vibrate through my mind" (3). Similarly, in Derbyshire, as he walks along "a little ruined gray bridge" on his way to Haddon Hall, James speaks of "ghosts" and confesses: "I felt the incommunicable spirit of the scene with the last, the right intensity. The old life, the old manners, the old figures seemed present again" (48). Straining his ear, he imagines that he "might surely hear on the flags of the castle court ghostly footfalls and feel in their movements the old heart-beats," though he finally admits that the "only footfall I can conscientiously swear to, however, is the far from spectral tread of the damsel who led me through the mansion in the prosier light of the next morning" (48). Although the physicality of the past has gone—the footsteps are not ghostly, but rather human—for James, these sites metaphysically situate travelers in a liminal space, grounded in the present, yet able to comprehend the past with an intimacy that makes historical voices, customs and traditions, and values a necessary and real part of the modern moment.

In “A Visit to Old Chester,” Cather attempts to celebrate that same accumulation of history. However, the commentary often swings uneasily between a desire to appreciate a cathedral, for example, and the compulsion to expose the brutality tied to its narrative. She acknowledges that Chester is “the quaintest and most picturesque of all English towns,” and she lingers at the cathedral in “utter peacefulness” (893, 896). For Cather, “the rain that fell so quietly or the sun that shone so remotely into the green court in the center, with its old, thick sod, its pear tree and its fleur-de-lis . . . made the desirableness of the cloister in the stormy years seem not impossible” (896). The acknowledgment of the storminess of Chester’s past effectively evokes long-ago struggles; however, Cather seems haunted by the destruction that occurred there, and her gruesome portrait of human butchery belies her attempt at subtlety and destabilizes the quaint image that she initially paints.

Without Norman and Saxon butchered each other, and poachers were flayed alive and forests planted over the ruins of free holders’ homesteads, but within the cloister the garden court was green, the ale went to the abbot’s cellar, and venison to his table, and though kings were slain or communities wiped out the order of prayers and offices and penances was never broken. (896)

While the commentary honors spiritual perpetuity, it also exposes the brutal history of carnage looming in the background and casts a critical eye toward the church. That Cather uses such macabre language, even evoking ghastly images of individuals being skinned alive, suggests that she can neither ignore nor write euphemistically about the horrifying events that occurred just beyond the cathedral walls. Similarly, her remarks

regarding the uninterrupted supply of meat and drink to the abbot in the midst of a war smacks of disapproval, and the contrast between such dramatic human suffering and the seemingly nonchalant continuation of everyday life creates a shadow of impudence around those within the monastery. On one level, the commentary interrogates the relation between religious values, the culture of the organized religion, and the community. However, that Cather's critique is situated against an English backdrop underscores her negative valuation of England and casts a shadow on its most sacred institution.

In the same way, her portrayal of Hawarden Castle demonstrates her refusal to whitewash brutality. Cather "spent half of a June day in almost utter solitude at the foot of the tower," and she confesses that the "temptation to attempt to reconstruct the period when these things were a part of the living fabric of the world, is one that must necessarily assail an ardent imagination" ("A Visit" 895). According to Cather, the "brighter the day, the greener the park, the more deep the significance of their ghost of Saxon oppression, the more mystically it speaks of 'far off, old unhappy things, and battles long ago'" (895).²⁵ Although her desire to "reconstruct" the scene suggests a Jamesian-like desire to resituate the past in the present, the use of the word "assail" insinuates violence against Cather's own "imagination." That she laces her commentary with language that evokes war and oppression further implies a struggle between the desire to commemorate history and the impulse to signify the castle as a place of subjugation and violence. Cather echoes previous travelers when she acknowledges the significance of Chester's famed Rows and walls; however, she apparently finds little

²⁵ Cather is inaccurately quoting Wordsworth's "The Solitary Reaper" here. The line actually reads:
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago

interest in either. She merely notes that: “In the business part of the town the streets are nearly all called ‘rows,’ that is, the second story of each building is built over the side walls and forms a sort of roof, being supported by heavy posts” and remarks that some of the structures date “from Elizabeth’s time, some are even older” (“A Visit” 893).

Cather provides a general description of Chester’s walls that relates the date they were erected and the material used to build them. Then, she remarks that “the top of the wall is now used as a promenade and forms a delightful walk from which you can look down into the walled gardens” (894). Such perfunctory commentary evokes the type of bare-bones factual information found in guidebooks, and it artfully side-steps the usual practice of chronicling one’s experience of walking along the ancient wall. In *Certain Delightful English Towns*, William Dean Howells fondly recalls his “first ramble on the wall” (455). During that walk, he discovered “a house . . . of such quaintness and demureness that it needed no second glance . . . to convince us that one of Thomas Hardy’s heroines lived there” (455). Henry James also blissfully writes about “strolling and restrolling along the ancient wall,” and he claims that it is “perfect in its antiquity” (*English* 35). Reveling in the “effect of the brave little walls of Chester” (35), James lauds the walls as the best “example of that phenomenon so delightfully frequent in England—an ancient property . . . lovingly readopted and consecrated to some modern amenity” (36). Although he never forgets that the wall “was once a more serious matter,” James subordinates Chester’s dark past to the happy experience of encountering a site where the ancient and contemporary coalesce (36).

For Cather, however, the human suffering associated with wall diminishes its aesthetic value and transforms her time spent walking along the wall into a rather

forgettable experience. Instead of writing about leisurely rambles along the ancient structure, Cather explicitly describes the “serious matter” that James merely alludes to.

As she puts it:

Before the arrival of the king [Charles I], the city, which was one of the most loyal in the west, had stood a long siege by the parliamentarians. The citizens were reduced to eating all their cats and dogs, and every silver coin was cut into four pieces and stamped with the city arms, each fraction representing the value of a whole coin, to remedy the contraction of currency. When the King relieved the town it was only to see his forces routed outside the walls and Cromwell’s enter the gates. (“A Visit” 894)

In *Certain Delightful English Towns*, Howells acknowledges that “gloomy moment” when King Charles’s army was “routed by the Parliamentarians,” though such dreary material is nestled in pages of sycophantic compliments about Chester’s beauty and historic wonders (456). While Howells triumphantly declares that “it was the right side which won,” Cather’s tone is much less celebratory (456). Gruesome images of citizens dining on their beloved pets and the depiction of the astonishing devaluation of currency illustrate the degree of suffering endured here and admonish those who, through their emphasis on touring and leisure, signify the walls as little more than an extension of the tourist industry.

Cather’s unconventional portrayal of these sacred historical sites unmasks her anxiety and reveals her inability—or her refusal—to negotiate the brutality of history with the aesthetic or even the practical value of these scenes.²⁶ Jeffrey Melton has used

²⁶ Joel Cook, in *England: Picturesque and Descriptive: Reminiscences of Foreign Travel*, includes similar commentary in his description of Hawarden Castle. However, Cook’s discussion of such grisly material is

the term “balance” to describe the phenomenon that occurs when Americans use travel as a means of reconciling “the opposing feelings of connection and independence” toward their English “heritage” (“Touring” 211). According to Melton, “travel helped them, through learning from the experience, to respect European achievements without accepting the ruin and decay associated with them” (“Touring” 211). Narratives by James, Howells, and Edith Wharton exemplify such balance. James’s and Howells’s laudatory portrayal of sites throughout England reveal their relation to the Motherland and demonstrate their ability to balance their perceptions of “European achievements,” their ruin and, by extension, their brutal histories. Wharton’s *A Motor-Flight through France* suggests that “reverence for the accumulated experiences of the past” is the “most precious emotion” that these ancient sites can evoke (11). An encounter with a cathedral, for example, can provide “a light by which one lives”; it can evoke “the desire, in short, to keep intact as many links as possible between yesterday and to-morrow” (11). By contrast, Cather’s articles are laden with anxiety. The sense of reverence for the past has been put aside, and she thoroughly rejects the practice of idealizing, theorizing about, or writing euphemistically about Europe’s tradition of brutality. Her portraits consistently devalue the aesthetic and historic splendor of England’s most sacred sites and suggest a desire to upset the balance created by her fellow American travelers.

contextualized and fulfills the rhetorical purpose of his narrative. In his Introduction, Cook clearly states his desire to fill a void with his two-volume guide of England. He claims that

there are few satisfactory and comprehensive books about this land that is so full of renowned memorials of the past and so generously gifted by Nature. Such books as there are either cover a few counties or are devoted only to a local description, or else are merely guide-books. The present work is believed to be the first attempt to give in attractive form a book which will serve not only as a guide to those visiting England and Wales, but also as an agreeable reminiscence to others, who will find that its pages treat of familiar scenes. (iv)

Escaping England

In her final article about England, which was actually written in Paris, Cather turns to the theater and writes about Beerbohm Tree's production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. In the fabricated setting of the playhouse, Cather retreats to the safety of the Old World that so many Americans celebrate. Finally, she finds an opportunity to yield to—and enjoy—the mythological England that so many write about. For Cather, there has always been a gap between the England that exists in guidebooks and travel narratives and her own experience. Theodore Dreiser sensed this chasm between the idea of a place and its reality, and in *A Traveler at Forty* he acknowledges that our “built-up notions of things are really far more impressive in many cases than the things themselves” (58). In one description of London, he reiterates that view and claims that:

London is a fanfare of great names; it is a clatter of vast reputations; it is a swirl of memories and celebrated beauties and orders and distinctions. It is almost impossible anymore to disassociate the real from the fictitious or, better, spiritual. There is something here which is not of brick and stone at all, but which is purely a matter of thought. It is disembodied poetry; noble ideas; delicious memories of great things; and these, after all, are better than brick and stone. (58)

For Dreiser, there is little that distinguishes the reality of London from its famous ethos. He believes that there is truth in both. He resists the urge to separate the “real” from the myth, and his comments even imply that he values the construct of London far more than the real city that he tours in 1912.

But while Dreiser is content to perpetuate England's textually constructed ethos (although he does, at times, challenge it), Cather finds it impossible to reside in those "delicious memories." She draws a sharp, distinctive line between the real and what Dreiser calls the "spiritual," and she either will not or cannot reconcile the chasm between the mythological sense of this place and its reality. Still, a night at the theater provides a respite from the world of abrasive shop girls, deprivation, and depravity. It represents a space where the myth of England, its history and culture, and the present moment merge. Cather finds herself transported back in time through the "careful reproduction of . . . streets and buildings as one finds in Chester and Ludlow today, left over from Elizabethan days" ("Merry" 918). She claims that actress Ellen Terry "seemed . . . wholly in atmosphere, the only one who was imbued with the spirit of things Elizabethan" and, through Terry's portrayal of Mrs. Page, Cather obtains a better comprehension of "that wildfire wit which has always baffled me" (920). According to Cather, there is "a bit of old England left in" the actress (920). These moments alleviate Cather's distress, and the theater, rather than castles and cathedrals that stand against a backdrop of suffering and depravity, facilitates her escape to the Old World.

The review of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was written in Paris, and those comments make up the first of a two-part installment. The second half of that article, entitled "Dieppe and Rouen," details Cather's journey across the English Channel into France and reveals her relief to be leaving England. She seems confounded that "so small a body of water as the English channel" could "separate two worlds so different" (921). According to Cather, her eyes had become "accustomed for some weeks to the blackness of London," and they "ached with the glare of the sun on the white and yellow sand"

(922). And when she sees a child “flying a red and green kite,” she confesses that “one’s heart went just as high” (922). The remainder of the article records her impressions of Dieppe and Rouen, and the five articles after this focus entirely on France. However, despite her relief to be out of England, these comments are not Cather’s final word on the country that caused so much distress. “In the Country of Daudet,” her final article from Europe, celebrates the people of Arles for their tendency to “make songs as they make wine” (948), laments that she did not “see a bullfight at Arles” (949), and considers relation between ancient Rome and modern day France. After that, she “somewhat unexpectedly reverts to England to close the series,” as Kates so aptly puts it (66). In this last over-the-shoulder glance back at a parade in London, Cather reflects on a moment of patriotic celebration that recalls her first day in Liverpool. This time, however, the scene is written without the anxiety of that initial episode.

In London, when “Lord Kitchener and his troops returned from Africa,” Cather sees “a tramping of red coats everywhere, and the trains of rajahs from the east were moving this way and that, glittering in gold and crimson, the nobles of a conquered race” (951). Such descriptions foreground England’s military might, but Cather suggests that “the spirit of the day” resides in the children gathering around the “several thousand cavalry horses picketed in Hyde Park” (952). There are “rows and rows of children, children who had clambered out of carriages, children who had clambered out of gutters, children who seemed to have sprung from a sowing of the dragon’s teeth; and they were all petting and stroking the animals with a pride, an earnestness, a wistfulness touching to see” (952). As these children “vow” their allegiances to England, Cather is struck by their intense patriotism, and she admits that she “felt in a flash of conviction from what blood

the world's masters were to come" (952). She quotes Rudyard Kipling: "On the bones of the English, the English flag is stayed," and then adds: "From the time the Englishman's bone harden into bones at all, he makes his skeleton a flagstaff, and he early plants his feet like one who is to walk the world and the decks of all the seas" (952).²⁷ These words close Cather's remarks from abroad and bring her commentary full-circle. While patriotic revelry in Liverpool caused great anxiety for Cather, this recollection represents a far more even presentation of English nationalism and suggests that she has finally, by the end of her journey and writing from the safety of France, achieved some sort of equilibrium in her relation to England.

In *Alexander's Bridge*, Cather creates a similarly balanced portrait of London. Bartley Alexander calls the British Museum "the ultimate repository of mortality" (33), and he notices that the "parks were full of children and nursemaids and joyful dogs that leaped and yelped and scratched up the brown earth with their paws" (90). It is a city of nearly unrivaled historic import, but for Alexander, London represents energy and youthful vitality. The balance that is present in this 1912 novel is foreshadowed in "In the Country of Daudet." Such portraits encapsulate the type of "continuity of things" that James writes about at St. Paul's. They represent the coalescing of England's past, present, and future, and even suggest that patriotism and love of country can transcend class. The horses and "red coats" of Cather's 1902 London scene evoke the tradition of England's history of war while simultaneously reaffirming the country's current imperial aspirations, and the boys fervently pledging their allegiance ensures the constant regeneration of England's military. Finally, that the boys come from all walks of life, not only from "gutters," but also from "carriages," suggests the universality of English

²⁷ Cather is quoting from Kipling's 1891 poem, "The English Flag."

patriotism despite tremendous social inequality and injustice. That Cather recreates such a scene without retreating to Americanisms reveals the evolution of her relationship with England. Perhaps she has finally found a path—in France and later in fiction—to treating England without the anxiety of gender, social class, and history pressing upon her.

The Anxiety of Guidebooks and Genre

The arrival in Liverpool, the advance to Chester, and tours of British and French cathedrals and museums indicate that Cather follows a fairly predictable trail and engages in the usual activities abroad.²⁸ Yet, however conventional her path seems, the presentation of that tour tends to be rather unconventional, for Cather distinguishes her journey by eliminating nearly every trace of the standard sights from her narrative and by foregrounding those places that maintain their cultural heritages but have not been catalogued by guidebooks. Thus, there are no references to her tour of Oxford, and references to St. Paul's and the Thames do little more than situate Cather in a physical space. Conversely, in *A Traveler at Forty*, Dreiser devotes an entire chapter to the Thames, provides the details of his visit to the House of Parliament, and writes meticulously about his journey to Canterbury, where he tours a cathedral and is “moved” by its history (196). In *Europe, through a Woman's Eye*, Lucy Yeend Culler also painstakingly narrates her every move in Europe, even noting the “frilled lizard, having a long tail, with a spike at the end” that she sees in the British Museum (156-57). In *Italian Backgrounds*, Edith Wharton maintains that such scenes represent the “foreground” of a place and are “the property of the guide-book and of its product” (177). For Wharton,

²⁸ See Grant Allen's chapter entitled “What Parts of Europe to Visit” in *The European Tour* (19-34) for the recommended itinerary.

“the background” holds “the real picture” of a place, and she believes that one must move beyond the “symbols” of touring and escape the “museum-atmosphere” of catalogued sites to discover the real treasures of travel (Wharton 174, 177).

That Cather elides so many of her more traditional experiences and spends a large quantity of time off the beaten path suggests that she also wants to investigate the European “background” and avoid spending her days trudging along with her nose in a guidebook. She especially demonstrates an affinity for quiet, rural spaces. Cather finds Shropshire appealing because it is “the source of Mr. [A. E.] Housman’s little volume of lyrics entitled *A Shropshire Lad*” and because “remoteness, the unchangedness, and time-defying stillness” characterize the town (“Out” 897). In Ludlow, too, she discovers a place of “few modern homes,” where no “one comes . . . except the country gentlemen about, when they ride into town, or folk who bicycle over from the neighboring towns of a Sunday” (899). Both Shropshire and Ludlow are primarily described in terms of their green spaces and “broad meadows,” and these rural environs provide a much-needed respite from the dinginess and degeneracy of the metropolis. At the same time, these background spaces facilitate Cather’s confessed desire to escape the “beaten track of the summer tourist in England” (897). Shropshire and Ludlow are under-valued by tourists and ignored by travel guides—Baedeker barely mentions them in his guide to Great Britain. Consequently, they are often overlooked by the masses. The absence of other tourists and the lack of official commentary about these sites means that those who do venture into these spaces—and this is important for female travelers—can experience these sites without the angst associated with being a “tourist” and without the intervening voice of the travel guide looming in the background.

As I have already shown, Cather's articles demonstrate an anxiety tied to the brutal—and official—histories of the places that she toured in England. “Out of the Beaten Track” reveals her attempt, while still in England, to find her own voice, to convey her perceptions of a site, and to escape the associated history and brutality. Yet, as she gazes upon “the magnificent remains of Ludlow castle, once one of the most important and always one of the hotly contested fortresses in the kingdom” (900), Cather retreats and falls back on a lethargic, guide-book style of reporting. Rather than sharing her experience, Cather opines:

The ruins of the great hall built by Sir Henry for the council of the governing heads of Wales, and of the extensive chambers and banqueting halls built for the entertainment of his royal sovereign and her peers tax the imagination; they so far surpass modern notions of splendor. (900)

Such bland commentary contrasts sharply with her lively remarks concerning the day that she and McClung “sat beside the Severn looking across to the fields” imagining Housman playing football as a youngster when “who should come racing out over the green but a company of lads with their pigskin ball” (897). This more personalized way of writing about the excursion is consistently overshadowed by an anxious compulsion that compels Cather to regurgitate the official historical narratives of England's landmarks and to make trite comments about the “ruins” and how they “tax the imagination.” Such tedious comments reiterate her uneasy relation to these sites and to this type of touring. Further, when Cather returns to topics related to “combat” (900) and when she describes “the smoke of the burning village and dead men lying by the wall” at the end of an already well-documented twelfth-century battle (901), her “I” becomes

further obscured, and her own narrative is entirely lost. Consequently, what began as an article about escaping tourism becomes the antithesis of that, and it falls victim to Cather's habit of subordinating her experiences and impressions with the perfunctory recitation of guide-book facts.

This suppression of personal experience and the consistent return to the historical narrative, even though it causes unease, suggests an anxiety stemming from the fundamental issue of writing about travel itself and what the travel narrative can or should do. Put simply, Cather experiences an anxiety of genre. That Cather (like Wharton) seeks to move herself into the "background" suggests an unease related to authorizing, or articulating, one's perceptions of conventional sites and, perhaps, an apprehension over writing in the male-dominated travel writing industry. Terry Caesar suggests that "Wharton seems blocked by guidebooks," and Cather perpetually vacillates between a desire to incorporate the authoritative guidebook discourse into her narrative and an impulse to situate herself in spaces just beyond their narrative influence (59). Traditionally written by and for men, nineteenth-century guidebooks overwhelmingly address male travelers and focus on their interests and activities. Women are an afterthought, for it is assumed that they are accompanied by their husbands or some other male protector.

In his *Handbook for American Travellers in Europe*, Roswell Park provides tips on "packing a gentleman's trunk" (14), catalogues a man's "motives" for travel—business, health, education, and sports-related activities—and addresses the "philosophic traveller, who is a scholar, a patriot, and a Christian" (10). Park assumes that the male traveler "will wish to see both nature and art, both men and things, in their true aspects,

however various; and to see the best specimens of each class of objects in their appropriate localities” (10-11). Such discourse necessarily excludes women. In fact, Park only mentions female travelers once, as someone to be listed when the male traveler applies for a passport (29). Caesar suggests that guidebooks “act on the very sources” of a woman’s “own authority” and deny even the “possibility of finding her own routes” (59). As a central element of touring and the tourist industry, guidebooks serve “as yet another patriarchal construction that simultaneously marginalized and interiorized women” (Caesar 58). If they consider women at all, they tell them where to go, when to go, with whom to go, and how to think about what they see when they get there. Such prescriptive and exclusive “guides” are hardly useful for women travelers.

It seems scarcely unexpected, then, that women like Wharton and Cather would seek to explore unconventional routes. Wharton’s tour of Italy, documented in *Italian Backgrounds*, takes her to both catalogued and uncatalogued sites. In Parma, she turns her attention to Italian museums and proclaims that the majority of “museums in Italy are dead palaces, and none is more inanimate than that of Parma” (123). These museums house various “ducal treasures,” “family portraits,” and “Bernini-like busts of the Bourbon dukes of Parma, with voluminous wigs and fluttering steinkerks; old furniture, old majolica, and all those frail elaborate trifles that the irony of fate preserves when brick and marble crumble” (123). However, Wharton categorizes such spaces and artifacts as “accessories of a ruined splendour” because they have been “catalogued, numbered and penned up in glass cases” (123). For Wharton, they “can no more revive the life of which they formed a part than the contents of an herbarium can renew the scent and murmur of a summer meadow” (123). But in the “nook,” a place that has been

“neglected by the tourist,” Wharton finds scenes that are compelling precisely because the traveler can determine for herself what makes them significant (5).²⁹ Tuscany, according to Wharton, exemplifies the “nook,” and she confesses that she and her traveling companions “felt the thrill of explorers sighting a new continent. It seemed, in fact, an unknown world which lay beneath us in the early light” (88).³⁰ The exuberant commentary reveals the potential of these sites while simultaneously inviting the female traveler to imagine herself an explorer of remote, unknown regions. Wharton treats Tuscany as if it were uncharted and unexplored by guidebooks and travel narratives alike, even though it had been thoroughly documented. She wants to discover areas of significance without a guide book author explaining how she ought to respond to the scene, and the “nook” represents those spaces of opportunity where female travelers can momentarily escape patriarchal guidance, forge their own paths, and create their own meanings.

For Cather, the “nook” is a space sans cathedrals and castles. It is a quiet, rural place where history, tradition, and living culture come together in a meaningful way. For example, Barbizon was the home of the transformative “Barbizon School” of the nineteenth century, but as a French village in and of itself, Barbizon was almost entirely ignored in guide-books and other travel narratives. For Cather, the village represents “the home of hard-working folk,” and it evokes a spirit of the past not found in the world of museums and castles. She heartily acknowledges the significance of Barbizon as an art center and credits “Millet, Rousseau, and a few fellow artists” who “made the place a

²⁹ Terry Caesar provides a useful analysis of the nook in *Forgiving the Boundaries: Home as Abroad in American Travel Writing*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1995. See especially pages 53-69

³⁰ For a full account of Wharton’s expedition, see the chapter entitled “A Tuscan Shrine” in *Italian Backgrounds*, pp. 84-106.

rendezvous of artists from all over the world” (930). However, as she surveys the village’s “one crooked street” and the “low, straw-roofed stucco houses,” Cather remarks that “it is hard to believe that for thirty years painters, littérateurs, and musicians have lived and worked here for months together” (930). Subordinating Barbizon’s fame as the home of the “Barbizon School” to the primitive landscape of the village, Cather observes:

The first care of all these people has been to leave intact the beauty that first drew them there. They have built no new and shining villas, introduced no tennis courts, or golf links, or electric lights. They have even heroically denied themselves any sewage system whatever, and the waste water from the kitchens and water tubs flows odorously along through the streets. (“One Sunday” 930)

Throughout her tour, the narratives of famed sites consistently serve as a source of anxiety for Cather. As she turns away from the catalogued descriptions and prescribed interpretations, she finds a new way, a more personal way, of experiencing these spaces. Her re-visioning of Barbizon thus facilitates her escape from the cathedral-and-castle way of touring and situates her in a more comfortable space that is reminiscent of an earlier time. Contrasting sharply with England, a land of rich history but marked by human suffering, and America, with its new construction and modern conveniences, Barbizon seems historic, artistic, and full of life. It is a site that she can discover on her own terms and that allows her to commemorate an aspect of life and the past not found in guidebooks.

Feminizing Travel

Grant Allen suggests in his 1899 *European Tour* that “If you want to know and understand the world of men, you must go and see it” (11). His travel guide is addressed to “*the young man*” and “the young man’s father” (15), and his counsel reasserts cultural assumptions regarding the correlation between male travel, knowledge, and power. Such movement is “an inherently male act,” to quote Susan Bassnett, and the goal of that travel is “to circumscribe, define, and hence control the world” (230). Conventional travel guides and narratives reiterate this patriarchal paradigm of travel. In his 1900 *England, Picturesque and Descriptive: Reminiscences of Foreign Travel*, Joel Cook calls Liverpool “the world’s greatest seaport” (4) and reports that the city’s docks “have cost over \$50,000,000 and are the crowning glory of Liverpool” (5). Of Caernarvonshire and its “remarkable estuary,” the Menai Strait, Cook observes the “evidence of an almost pre-historic people in relics of nations that inhabited its banks before the invasion of the Romans” (29). Emerson, in his *English Traits*, painstakingly describes “the Englishman” (106), but offers little more than a catalogue of generalities. According to Emerson, the English man “is very petulant and precise about his accommodation at inns,” he has “stamina” (108), and in the “company of strangers, you would think him deaf; his eyes never wander from his table and newspaper” (109). While Cook’s comments reinforce the notion of England, and specifically Liverpool, as a commercial center and reaffirm the historic significance of the country, Emerson’s descriptions provide a thorough characterization of “the Englishman” as a type. In each instance, the travel narrative serves to disseminate knowledge and facts. Moreover, because these texts emphasize the traditionally male worlds of business, war, and history, the material reinscribes the

patriarchal order and essentially eradicates the female worlds of home and family, and even the culture of everyday life.

Such an elision of the feminine necessarily creates distress when women travel. The tradition of travel writing imposes a male perspective onto women, denies their experience and opinions, and forces them to see the world through men's eyes. Thus, when women write about travel, their intention is often to emphasize something other than "the agriculture, manufactures, commerce, customs and habits of the people, and political affairs" of foreign lands (Culler 225). They write the female world and the female perspective of touring into existence. Lucy Yeend Culler reminds her readers in 1883 that "this is EUROPE THROUGH A WOMAN'S EYE" (225), and she writes about such stereotypically feminine acts as attending church "services in the morning at the Madeleine" and shopping (14). She even advises that there is no "need to go to Rome or Florence to buy mosaics" because the "shops of London contain everything that can be bought anywhere in the wide world" (149). Though these activities may appear trite, they signify the domain of nineteenth-century women, and Culler's inclusion of such actions not only reasserts her womanliness, but also creates an anxiety-free space for womanly activities in the male-dominated world of travel. According to Bassnett, this type of writing represents an "alternative" to male "mapping" that "consists of tracing patterns from the most banal and trivial everyday events so as to create a completely different set of identifiable structures outside patriarchal control" (230).

Though the banalities of Cather's travel writing do not extend to shopping tips, she surveys much more than the commercial (and patriarchal) exterior of the places she visits. Focusing on the living culture of Europe's environs, Cather posits an alternative

paradigm for comprehending culture and writing about travel. While her initial articles on English cathedrals and castles reveal her attempts to follow a more traditional method of touring and travel writing, in France, she completely throws off the burden of convention. One of the most surprising aspects of Cather's approach is the de-centering of Paris. Typically, Americans define France through their Parisian exploits and, like Julian Street in *Paris à la carte*, they write about their adventures in "music-halls" and "cafés," and they celebrate the city's "night life" (17, 18). Yet, Cather reduces the splendor of Paris to a single article, "Two Cemeteries in Paris." She dutifully describes several well-known tombs, including those of Balzac and Alfred de Musset, but then she echoes an irreverent remark supposedly made by a fellow American tourist: "The general effect [of Montmartre] strongly suggests a tennis court converted into a grave yard" (925). She even observes that "the soil of Pere-Lachaise is high and sandy" (928). With her emphasis on stillness and death, Cather disassociates Paris from its city-that-never-sleeps reputation and redefines it as little more than one more European city dedicated to "commemorating their great men" (929). At the same time, this refusal to write "Paris" into her travel narrative reasserts her anxiety over urban spaces, and her observations of Paris (and London) defy the male-asserted notion that cities are the pinnacle of culture.

Cather's analysis topples assumptions that "in France Paris *is everything*," as Grant Allen once put it (82). Most of her articles on France emphasize rural villages and forthrightly challenge traditional ways of comprehending the country and its historical sites (82).³¹ In "One Sunday in Barbizon," Cather treats Fontainebleau, another site of

³¹ Cather's departure from presenting Paris as the definitive France may be influenced by Henry James who, in *A Little Tour in France*, proclaims that although "France might be Paris, Paris was by no means France" (12). In 1882, James set off through the rural backgrounds of France and explored an entirely different side of the country. However, while his journey does much to challenge the notion that Paris *is*

immense historical significance with special appeal to Americans, as little more than a necessary stopping point along the way to Barbizon. Her zeal for Fontainebleau's history and palace, which is "chiefly interesting through its souvenirs of Henry IV, Francis I, and Napoleon," is negligible (929). Mechanically, she reports that "we saw Napoleon's bed, the table on which he signed his abdication, the grand portico from which he said adieu to the grand army, and his little throne, with the back round like a drum" (929). After that, she casually states that she and McClung "lunched at a place called the Cordon Bleu, which is thronged with bicyclers" (929). Such perfunctory commentary deflates the value of these "souvenirs" and reduces these historic symbols to mere checkpoints.

However, when she lays her Baedeker aside and travels to Lavandou, a small "fishing village of less than a hundred souls, that lies in a beautiful little bay of the Mediterranean," Cather transforms a tiny dot on the map into a site that is full of meaning ("In a Principality" 943). According to Cather, Lavandou "does not exist on the ordinary map of France, and Baedeker, in his 'Southern France,' merely mentions it" (942, 943).

Apparently, she is drawn to the scene "chiefly because we could not find anyone who had

France, the tour reinscribes traditional ways of interpreting physical spaces. James emphasizes conventional scenes—cathedrals and landscapes—and his descriptions reinforce nineteenth-century ideologies about the traveler's ethos, what constitutes culture, and what travel itself can and should achieve. Granted, in La Rochelle, he comments on the "[f]isher-folk of picturesque type . . . strolling about," and he notices that "several of the men" had "handsome, simple faces, not at all brutal, and with a splendid brownness—the golden-brown colour on cheek and beard that you see on an old Venetian sail" (115). Nevertheless, such depictions rely upon stereotypes or, at the very least, evoke scenes from Jean-François Millet's paintings, and they demonstrate the ways in which James imposes meaning on these individuals and uses his touristic gaze to hold them firmly in their prescribed places. Lacking voice and appearing as little more than animated characters from a painting, these individuals go about their lives and seem to exist for little more than completing James's portrait. Moreover, while Cather eschews conventional tourist sites, James seeks refuge in them. While in Narbonne, he finds himself in the marketplace. There are "vendors and chafferers—old women under awnings and big umbrellas, rickety tables piled high with fruit, white caps and brown faces, blouses, sabots, donkeys" (158). He sees "washerwomen" and a number of "rusty men, scattered all over the place" who were "buying and selling wine" (158). For Cather, such scenes of French country life would likely delight, but for James the scene is oppressive. The town, he maintains, is "overflowing with life. Its streets are mere crooked, dirty lanes, bordered with perfectly insignificant houses" that were "filled with the same clatter and chatter that I had found at the hotel" (158). The whole town, James argues, seems "sordid and overheated" (159). Finally, he seeks refuge in Narbonne's cathedral, a place that "seemed to extend to me, as in the Middle Ages, the privilege of sanctuary" (159).

ever been here, and because in Paris people seemed never to have heard of the place” (943). The perfect “nook,” Lavandou invites the traveler to discover her own way of exploring and evaluating a site. It provides an opportunity to experience something less focused on the world of museums and castles and more centered on contemporary life. Put differently, Cather signifies the region in terms that defy patriarchal notions of culture. It is a feminized space, and commercial exploits, war, and depravity are conspicuously absent from her portrayal. Characterizing this French village through scenes of domesticity and community stability, Cather describes families sitting around tables “set under an arbor or under an olive tree . . . eating their figs and sea-grass salad and drinking their sour wine and singing—always singing” (944). And when Cather and McClung stroll along a country road to Cavalaire, “a village six miles down the coast” (945), they encounter “a few fishermen, and several women walking beside little carts drawn by a donkey no bigger than a sheep, and every woman was knitting busily as she walked, stopping only long enough to greet us” (946). The scene is idealized but, for Cather, these rural backgrounds are far more comfortable and compelling than anything in the touristy foreground, and she ultimately rejects the tendency to fill one’s travel journal with jaunts to all of the “must see” sights.

As she continues to celebrate the ordinary, Cather writes fondly of “two little girls, whom we meet every day seeking pasture for their goat,” and she happily recalls the “old man who lives in a thatch on the hillside, from whom we buy figs; and the woman who goes about with scales and basket, selling lobster” (945). But more than writing domesticity and such simplicity of life into her narrative, Cather also destabilizes the ways in which the male world of business is perceived and comprehended. When she

passes through Cavalaire, another small village, she transforms a “station house and a little tavern by the roadside”—key symbols of the tourist industry—into a scene of male indolence and female productivity. In her portrait, the “station agent lay asleep on a bench beside his door, and his old mother and wife were knitting beside him” (946). Such images reiterate her desire to not only transform stereotypes of France, but also to inject women and their lives and experiences into the discourse of travel. That same effort is evident in her treatment of England’s canal people. Although that portrait is fraught with anxiety, Cather still de-centers the patriarchal systems of economics, shipping, and trade, and she injects hearty doses of womanhood and domesticity into what is a conventionally male-dominated scene.

In Provence, Cather continues to upend conventional ways of signifying travel. By portraying what had been considered an insignificant village as a tour-worthy place where history is preserved in the modern moment, she again calls into question traditional notions about journeying. Three years before Cather’s tour, Allen argued that the “old towns” of Southern France “contain nothing in the way of architecture or painting to detain the visitor; they are interesting merely in a distant view; seen nearer, they become offensive to more than one of the senses” (104). He claimed that the coast “is remarkable in Europe for its extraordinary lack of historical interest,” yet Cather seems hardly aware of such tremendous “lack” (104). She fills the historical void that Allen sees with scenes of family life, domestic culture, and the continuation of time-honored traditions.

According to Cather, the people of Provence:

keep carefully all their ancient festivals, the Noel and the feasts of their patron saints and name saints. They desire to live honourably and long, to

marry their daughters well and to have strong sons to succeed them, to avoid innovation and change, to drink their Muscat wine and eat their boiled snails and tomatoes fried in oil to the end. . . . Simple ambitions, these seem for this century, but they express nearly the whole will and need of the people of Provence, who are truly a pastoral people still. (“In the Country” 948)

Such seeming trivialities are typically elided from standard guidebooks and male-authored travel narratives. Therein lies the limited range of conventional touring and interpreting travel. Refusing to confine her field of vision to such a narrow method of ordering culture, Cather offers a broader scope that underscores lived experience. Her portrayal calls into question how historical narratives are created and perpetuated. It injects domesticity and home life into the discourse of travel, and it commemorates those community traditions that have been passed down for generations. In Cather’s travel writing, such material brings life to history and places and reiterates the lasting value of community, the past, and tradition.

Finally, Cather’s laudatory portrayals of French peasantry and rural domesticity contrast sharply with her sharp-tongued descriptions of the brutalized lower class of England. Her descriptions indicate a preference for rural life, domesticity, and the preservation of the family and its traditions. Her portrait of France, when compared with her hypercritical commentary on England, reiterates the chasm in Cather’s perception of these groups. To obtain a better understanding of this split, we return to “Seeing Things in London,” which not only records Cather’s impressions of the East End but also chronicles the day that she stands alongside England’s poorest citizens and watches the

Italians immigrants as they “celebrated the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel” (910). In the article, Cather draws a clear distinction between the Italians, with their Catholic devotion, and their English counterparts, the “howling, hooting heathen London mobs; men drunk, women drunk, unwashed and unregenerate” (910, 911). Although they are “poor” and even “pathetic” in their “attempts at ceremonial splendor,” the Italians are nonetheless “dignified” (910). According to Cather, they “undauntedly” attempt “to carry a little of the light and color and sweet devoutness of a Latin land into their grey, cold London,” even bringing it into “the heathen heart of the London slums” (911).

By contrast, the English men and women lining the streets wallow in “sodden heathendom,” and Cather assumes that they “have never been inside a church” (911). Returning to her standard of neatness, she berates the English women for wearing “their old bonnets tilted like horns over their bleary eyes” and for having “their skirts on wrong side first” (911). In a scene that iterates a respect for tradition and religious morality and reveals an absolute intolerance for drunkenness, a slovenly appearance, and what she sees as heathenism, Cather clearly indicates the value systems by which she judges the English and Italians. Both groups are impoverished, yet Cather’s simultaneous anguish and admiration stems from an ideological site within herself. This same value system reveals itself in her articles from France, where she escapes to rural areas and expresses admiration for what she interprets as a universal desire to respect the past, work hard, maintain respectability, and fortify the bonds of family through shared experiences at home and in the community.

Nostalgia and Homesickness

In *One of Ours*, Claude Wheeler reflects Cather's relation to rural France as he gazes at the French countryside and discovers things that remind him of home. There are wheat fields, and "American binders, of well-known makes, stood where the fields were beginning to ripen" (380). He is amazed at "the sight of the familiar cottonwood, growing everywhere. Claude thought he had never before realized how beautiful this tree could be," and he "felt" that the trees "were a real bond between him and this people" (380). These quaint scenes hearken back to Cather's own descriptions of strangely familiar sights in 1902. Claude notices "[p]ear trees, trained like vines against the wall" (380), while Cather admires a peach tree that has been forced to grow "against the wall until it spreads like a hardy vine and to mass beautiful flowers of every hue in their little gardens" ("One Sunday" 930). The transferal of these images reveals the specific aspects of the French landscape that most resonated for Cather, and they also demonstrate how scenes from travel can re-emerge in fiction. More important, however, is the connection between France and home in these two texts. In *One of Ours*, Claude finds comfort in the familiar landscape of France, but he is drawn there because it is the antithesis of home. There is "something that endured" in this ancient land, and that captivates him (454). In America, "people were always buying and selling, building and pulling down," but in France the "background held together" (454). He even wonders if, at the end of the war, he might "buy a little farm and stay here for the rest of his life" (454).

In 1902, however, French scenes that remind Cather of America make her homesick, and her commentary blends France and Nebraska in a way that blurs the boundaries between home and abroad. Finding "wheat fields" that are "quite as level as

those of the Nebraska divides,” she remarks that the “long, even stretch of yellow stubble, broken here and there by a pile of Lombard poplars, recalled not a little the country about Campbell and Bladen, and is certainly more familiar than anything I have seen on this side the Atlantic” (“One Sunday” 931). Barbizon also reminds Cather of her own past, and she experiences a sense of nostalgia here that makes her yearn for the lost days of childhood. She rests her eye on

a reaper of a well known American make, very like the one on which I have acted as super-cargo many a time. There was a comfortable little place where a child might sit happily enough between its father’s feet, and perhaps, if I had waited long enough, I might have seen a little French girl sitting in that happy, sheltered place, the delights of which I have known so well. (“One Sunday” 931)

In this rare instance, Cather inserts herself into the text and transforms her travel writing into a unique personal narrative where home and abroad coalesce. As she gazes out at the wheat fields, Cather confesses: “I found there was a touch of latent homesickness in the wide, empty, yellow fields and the reaper with the cozy seat which some little brown-skinned Barbizon girl would have tomorrow” (931). The portrait, with its past-present fluidity and its blending of the familiar and the unfamiliar, suggests the discovery of home abroad and creates a continuum that transcends both time and space. Moreover, by emphasizing “field working women” and men, and by pointing to American farming equipment on a French wheat field that is remarkably similar to the Nebraskan landscape, Cather thoroughly blurs the lines between France and Nebraska (“One Sunday” 931). Thus, in addition to redefining France through its rural domesticity and challenging

perceptions about that country, she also capsizes stereotypes of the American Midwest. In sum, Cather's portrait diminishes the lines that differentiate Nebraska from France, transforms notions about the former and the life it represents, and re-imagines Nebraska as a scene of classic picturesque beauty.

Cather's foray into France, especially in Barbizon, provides an opportunity to discover scenes that she can personally relate to and interpret in her own way. In such places, her anxiety diminishes, and her tour begins to reaffirm her sense of self. Put simply, she becomes more confident about her "I," and her narrative both proclaims and validates her own unique experience. In "The Laugh of the Medusa," Hélène Cixous urges women to write in this way and to break free from the patriarchal bounds of language. According to Cixous, women should not feel that they are bound by the same limitations as men because:

Unlike man, who holds so dearly to his title and his titles, his pouches of value, his cap, crown, and everything connected with his head, woman couldn't care less about the fear of decapitation (or castration),
adventuring, without the masculine temerity, into anonymity, which she can merge with without annihilating herself: because she's a giver. (888)

Such an assertion regarding a woman's lack of fear of "decapitation"—of losing her identity, as I have interpreted it—opens up enormous possibilities for analyzing travel writing by American women. It suggests that they can immerse themselves in *another* culture without the fear of losing themselves or without the need to control or claim the other culture. Cixous's postulation resonates with an observation made earlier in this chapter that women travelers write their narratives about things that are beyond the reach

of patriarchy. For Cixous, women's writing can and should be liberating; it is an opportunity to explore and speak without fear or reproof. Authorizing travel and interpreting their own movement provides women a literal escape from both the phallogocentric hegemony that structures society as well as the strictures of gender roles and social class. It allows women to order the world according to their own values and preferences. For Cather, the tour does that and provides entry into a space that she had previously only known vicariously. The experience granted an opportunity to comprehend the Old World in a new way and offered a means by which she could plunge into anonymity and the unknown. Though she emerged somewhat shaken, the narrative suggests that she was nonetheless more secure in her sense of self by the end.

Cather's travel writing reveals how the harsh realities of life in England and its brutal history undermined her assumptions about this mythological site. Her first seven articles demonstrate how anxiety, fears about the English other, and a shaken American identity fracture travel and perception and lead to a re-visioning of what is likely the most sacred of all destinations for Americans, Mother England. The "fear of decapitation," of losing her identity, evidences itself in these articles, and Cather saves herself by forcefully rejecting existing paradigms of travel and by penetrating the very scenes that cause so much distress. Her descriptions and commentary, though fraught and even insensitive at times, nonetheless reveal her attempts to regain a sense of control. By the end, as her portrayal of the military parade in London suggests, Cather can write about England without anxiety. Perhaps she has finally regained her balance and found a place for herself within this uncanny space. In France, avoids such anxious traveling altogether by re-centering the country and describing it as a rural nook. She thus easily situates

herself within this environ and uses travel as an opportunity to solidify her sense of self and her relation to this space. That Cather steps so comfortably into the French scene and even sees a version of her younger self there reveals her willingness to unite the past and present through travel, something that she resisted in England. It also implies a longing to inject more of her own voice into the narrative. As her portrayal of French villages and those glimpses into her personal life indicate, Cather has been liberated by this portion of her journey. Not only does she imagine a French version herself, but that she finds Nebraska in a French wheat field suggests infinite possibilities for creating a lasting continuum between the Old and New Worlds.

Dualism in *A Hoosier Holiday*:

Nostalgia and Progress, National Character and Personal Identity

In August 1915, Theodore Dreiser traveled with fellow Hoosier, Franklin Booth, from New York to Indiana. The resulting text, *A Hoosier Holiday*, chronicles that journey and offers Dreiser's assessment of America at a time of dramatic cultural change. Headlines documented how wealth and technology were transforming America's physical landscape, and Dreiser's back-road trek provided a view of those changes. As writers debated the consequences of mass immigration, the issue weighed heavy on Dreiser as he toured America's small towns. As journalists alleged that the unrest between capital and labor had morphed into an internal war, Dreiser fretted about that skirmish even as he admired the structures that signified that conflict. These matters informed Dreiser's journey, and he understood his trip as "a means of sizing up the middle west and interpreting American character," as he put it in a February 1916 letter to H. L. Mencken (*D-M Letters* 218-19). Consequently, Dreiser's travel narrative presents much more than a catalogue of stops as in a standard tourists' guide. Combining memoir, philosophy, and ethnography, *A Hoosier Holiday* provides a timely analysis of American culture and society. It "constitutes America," to borrow Priscilla Wald's language and, in addition to telling a story of travel, Dreiser strives to "articulate a cultural identity" and make "a passionate appeal for a recognizable America" (Wald 2).

The letter to Mencken also confides Dreiser's desire to add "a little personal history" to his book (218-19). He never intended to write only about the physical journey, and he certainly never meant for his narrative to conform to the strictest, most narrow,

notions of “travel writing.” Thus, when he writes about crossing from New York to Indiana, he also tells of a psychological journey through time and space, and even into memory. For Dreiser, the pilgrimage to Indiana and his travel narrative—even at its most ethnographic—was always personal. He had been absent from his native state for twenty-six years, and he had not seen Terre Haute, the city where he was born, since he was seven years old. It was a long-awaited return and, in *A Hoosier Holiday*, he confesses that “it had been one of my dearly cherished ideas that some day, when I had the time and the money to spare, I was going to pay a return visit to Indiana” (15). Eager to reclaim his “boyhood mood,” Dreiser seeks to re-situate himself in the memories and physical spaces of his past (330). He yearns to find his childhood homes as he nostalgically remembers them. More than anything, he hopes to find Indiana untouched by the twentieth century. He urges Booth to take “the poor, undernourished routes”—the back roads—because there, one can “have some peace and quiet” (21). But even more than relaxation, these little-used roads provide glimpses of a type of rurality that remind Dreiser of his boyhood. However, instead of taking him back to a place of comfort, the scenes expose the difficulty of bridging the gap between memory and lived experience. Although he longs to commemorate these rustic spaces, Dreiser struggles to negotiate this twentieth-century America with his nineteenth-century memories, and he constantly battles feelings of deracination and loss. Ultimately, the return shatters his sentimental boyhood illusions.

This chapter examines personal and national issues of identity in *A Hoosier Holiday*. More specifically, it analyzes the role of anxiety in Dreiser’s portraits of America and his sacred childhood spaces. Scholarship on the text thus far has largely ignored such issues. Douglas Brinkley contextualizes the book within America’s

bourgeoning automobile culture and proclaims that Dreiser is “singularly responsible for bringing the automobile to the forefront of American literature” (4). Andrew Gross postulates that Dreiser’s journey exemplifies “technological privilege,” and his article explores the relation between automobile touring and consumer culture (112). Gary Totten’s analysis emphasizes the visual elements of road travel, and he surmises that “Dreiser’s vision of early twentieth-century America celebrates the road’s freedom, uncertainty, and adventure, and reflects the visual and narrative implications of automotive technology” (44). In passing, Gross and Totten acknowledge Dreiser’s anxiety, but their focus is tourism, mass culture, and the novelty of the road trip itself. Furthermore, while recent scholarship addresses some of the societal issues raised in Dreiser’s travel narrative, the personal quest has been entirely ignored. This analysis bridges that gap.

This study hinges on the premise that American journeys are fraught with idiosyncratic anxiety, and this chapter identifies and analyzes multiple signs of such emotional distress in *A Hoosier Holiday*. Because Dreiser’s travel writing engages national and personal issues, his text produces adjacent images of the nation and the traveler. The juxtaposition of those images provides insight into the country, Dreiser the American citizen, and Dreiser the traveler and returnee. Accordingly, the first several sections of this chapter trace the development of his national portrait and explore the correlation between Dreiser’s perceptions of the nation and his concerns over cultural issues. Specifically, the analysis scrutinizes his impressions of America’s rural scene, situates *A Hoosier Holiday* within the cultural dialogue aimed at constructing the national ethos, and examines Dreiser’s response to societal issues including the relationship

between America and Europe, America's increasing wealth and signs of social injustice, as well as immigration. The chapter's final sections analyze Dreiser's personal journey back to Indiana and his psychological quest to retrieve a vanished aspect of his identity—his boyhood. The discussion surveys his impressions of his boyhood homes in their present state, and it examines his struggle to recapture, not merely a sense of the past, but the actuality of it—the “real” feeling of being in that moment. And when Dreiser realizes that the past is irrevocably lost, this study analyzes the subsequent feelings of loss and despair. Moreover, because returning, recovery, and origins are so critical to his journey, I also consider Dreiser's pilgrimage as a Lacanian retreat, an attempt to recapture the wholeness of the Imaginary. To that end, the discussion not only gauges Dreiser's reactions to Indiana but also contemplates the relation between memory, travel, and personal identity.

Nostalgia and Anxiety in the Modern Moment

Although Dreiser travels at a time of urbanization and change, he often foregrounds—and idealizes—country life, and his words reflect the sentimental nostalgia that many Americans felt at this time. Arthur P. Dudden's study of nostalgia in America suggests that it “was, and still remains [in 1961], a continuous undercurrent of American life, as compelling perhaps for the masses of people as any visionary glimpses of progress” (517). Moreover, according to Dudden, nostalgia presents itself as a “preference for the way things as they once were or, more importantly, *a preference for things as they are believed to have been* (517). This differentiation is particularly relevant to the nostalgic impulses that Americans felt in the early twentieth century. Their glances

back to the nineteenth century indicate not merely a simple desire to go back, but rather a re-visioning of nineteenth-century America through an idealized lens, making it seem like a more perfect moment than the present. Dreiser's rural descriptions reflect such nostalgia and indicate a dual intent: to immerse himself in romanticized rural scenes, and to commemorate and create a space for the pastoral in the national consciousness.³² Thus, when Dreiser encounters simple homes nestled in charming bucolic settings, the text becomes a platform for celebrating America's agrarian life and landscape.

In New York's countryside, he inhales the fragrant perfume of the "homey flowers of August" (26) and listens to the "tinkle of cowbells and the lowing of homing herds" (38). According to the wistful traveler, there is "something . . . very touching about all this" (38). The fertile fields, "delightful dooryards," and "long, low brick sheds" surrounded by "wind rhythmed marsh grass" provide a soothing glimpse of rurality for one accustomed to the streets and sounds of New York City (26). These idealized scenes also quell fears about the supposed vanishing rural life and landscape, and they fulfill Dreiser's nostalgic desire to retreat into the sheltered spaces of simpler days. Not only do they remind him of the nineteenth century, but they transport him back to his boyhood. He confesses that the small towns near Ohio's Maumee River "revived all the happiest days and ideals of my youth" (259). Happily, he notes that the "principle street" of Napoleon "was crowded with ramshackle buggies and very good automobiles (very fancy ones, in many instances) and farmers and idlers in patched brown coats and baggy, shapeless trousers" (259). Typically, we expect Dreiser to balk at such scenes. In Owego, Ohio, which he describes as an "old-fashioned comfortable American town at its best,"

³² For more on trends in national nostalgia, see Lawrence Levine's *The Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993.

Dreiser asserts that “such places and people are antipodal to anything that I could ever again think, believe or feel” (113). Still, his nostalgic gaze belies these typical displays of contempt for conventionalism. Even though he sometimes criticizes the “small mind of the townsmen,” Dreiser embraces the simplicity of their towns (113). The commonalities of rural America, according to this sentimental Dreiser, are “delightful pictures, every one of them” (261). He even confesses that he is “becoming enamored of our American country life once more” (26). Such remarks reveal his nostalgic, idealizing gaze, pay homage to America’s rural tradition, and express his desire to find permanence in an ever-changing world.

Perhaps even more than commemorating rurality and escaping modernity, *A Hoosier Holiday* clarifies Dreiser’s intent to incorporate a decidedly Midwestern landscape and sensibility into his American portrait. Put simply, he wants to define the Midwest for his readers. Willa Cather demonstrates that same aspiration in *My Ántonia*, where she constructs a similarly idealized portrait of the rural landscape. In the “Introduction,” her anonymous narrator recalls a journey with her friend Jim Burden. As the train moves across vast wheat-ripe fields and small, Midwestern towns, the two Nebraskan friends reminisce about “what it was like to spend one’s childhood in little towns like these, buried in wheat and corn, under stimulating extremes of climate” (3). They gaze out of the train’s window and see “never-ending miles of ripe wheat” (3). They rush past “country towns and bright-flowered pastures and oak groves wilting in the sun” and remember “the color and smell of strong weeds and heavy harvests; blustery winters with little snow, when the whole country is stripped bare and gray as sheet iron” (3). Cather’s narrator and Burden “agreed that no one who had not grown up in a little

prairie town could know anything about it. It was a kind of freemasonry, we said” (3). Dreiser shares these sentiments. Like Cather, he senses an absence in the American consciousness concerning Midwestern life and landscapes and, in *A Hoosier Holiday*, he insists that: “I shall have to tell you about them or the import of returning there will be as nothing” (17). And later, the struggle to convey what Indiana means to him continues: “I can hardly make you understand, I fear. Indiana is a world all unto itself” (261). According to Dreiser, even the “air felt different—the sky and trees here were sweeter. They really were” (261). Remarks such as these suggest a mysticism about the Midwest—that it is somehow unknowable to outsiders—and these texts signify the effort to unlock the secrets of the region and enrich the nation’s understanding of these enigmatic spaces.

Narratives such as *My Ántonia* and *A Hoosier Holiday* insist that the Midwest is a unique American space with great symbolic value, and the latter demonstrates the role of travel writing in constructing and perpetuating that symbolism. Marguerite S. Shaffer argues that by promoting the symbolic identities of “tourist landscapes” across the nation, the tourist industry created “quintessentially American places” (4). According to Shaffer, the industry “consciously” stressed “certain meanings and myths while ignoring others” and thus constructed “a canon of American tourist attractions”—Independence Hall, Fort Sumter, Yosemite—which “manifested a distinct national identity” (4).³³ Such a calculated approach to tourism inevitably brings “symbolic value” to the “American landscape” (Shaffer 6). The relation between American travel writing and this ethos-building project is hardly accidental. The nation’s most famous river, the Mississippi, represents what Thomas Ruys Smith calls “a vital location in the symbolic geography of

³³ Joel Cook, in his *America: Picturesque and Descriptive*, discusses these sites in detail.

America” (62). It is simultaneously comprehended as a “symbol” and a “site” (63). The river’s ethos was largely constructed through textual productions, thanks to writers like Mark Twain and Joel Cook. Their texts, in large part, made the river an iconic site.³⁴ New York City likewise gained its emblematic status through repeated depictions of its energy and opulence. In *By Motor to the Golden Gate*, Emily Post writes about “its flashing Broadway, its canyon streets, its teeming thoroughfares,” the “crowds,” and its “electric signs” (229-30). In the same fashion, H. G. Wells claims that New York is a city “lavish of light, it is lavish of everything, it is full of the sense of spending from an inexhaustible supply” (31). Fiction also plays a role in the construction of these regional identities. In Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie*, New York City is characterized by “magnificent residences . . . gilded shops, restaurants, resorts of all kinds” (205). It is a “kingdom of greatness” (*Sister* 206).³⁵ Such descriptions reinforce stereotypes about the quintessential American space, and these texts perpetuate notions of New York as a great—and terrible—city.

The Midwest, however, represents something altogether different. We are told that it represents the heart of America, that it is somehow more “real” than the America of New York or Chicago or San Francisco. Thus, those who take up the task of portraying the Midwest consistently disassociate the region from the nation’s cosmopolitan spaces.

It is the anti-metropolis, and Dreiser, like so many others, emphasizes a way of life not

³⁴ See Twain’s references to the Mississippi in *The Innocents Abroad* and also Joel Cook’s *America: Picturesque and Descriptive*.

³⁵ New York is not the only American city to achieve iconic value in this way. *The Jungle* epitomizes Chicago, and in *McTeague: A Story of San Francisco*, Frank Norris employs similar tactics to create a place-specific portrait of the West Coast city. From Trina’s earnest gaze “across the bay to where the city piled itself upon its hills” to scenes on Polk Street, Norris grounds his story in the symbolic San Francisco (55). Only on Polk Street can one find “corner drugstores with huge jars of red, yellow, and green liquids in their windows” and “cheap restaurants, in whose windows one saw piles of unopened oysters weighted down by cubes of ice, and china pigs and cows knee-deep in layers of white beans” (4). And, as if on cue, the cable car rattles by “with a vibrant whirring of its jostled glass and the joyous clanging of its bells” (204). Such scenes exemplify something symbolic about San Francisco. In the same way, when Cather, Dreiser, and Hamlin Garland, too, use this specificity of place in their narratives, they influence our comprehension of the Midwest as an iconic American space.

found in other parts of the nation. He sees the Midwest as a natural space of innocence, fecundity, and simplicity, a space unsullied by modernity and cosmopolitanism.

According to Dreiser, “frame and brick houses” set down on “pleasing grass plots” with trees characterize the Midwest (152). There is always a “main street and one cross street of stores . . . one or two red brick school houses,” a “sandstone court-house in a public square, and a railroad station, and four or five or six red brick churches” (152). Here, children attend church, visit the county fair, and celebrate “Booster Day” (497).³⁶ These scenes contrast strikingly with the hustle and bustle and glitz and glamor of New York and other large cities, and Dreiser’s meticulous use of these iconic symbols endows the region with enormous emblematic value. Life really seems simpler here, and Dreiser’s imagery solidifies the regional character of the Midwest and establishes its place within the national narrative.

Although *A Hoosier Holiday* contains distinct descriptions of the Midwest and other bucolic hinterlands, such scenes often fade into the background as a more potent image of modernity emerges. Thus, Dreiser’s text indicates the oppositional desires that Americans struggled with during this period: the yearning to explore twentieth-century advances while clinging to nineteenth-century memories and sensibilities. Only in California, according to Emily Post, can one escape this anxiety-inducing phenomenon. She claims that the West coast city is “[l]ight-hearted, happy, basking in the sunshine, her eyes not dreamily gazing into the past, nor avariciously peering into the future, but dancing with the joy of today—such is California!” (204). However, such freedom from the stronghold of the past and the allure of the future eludes Post during most of her

³⁶ A day of celebration aimed at “boosting” a town’s economy. As one boy describes it to Dreiser, “It’s the day all the stores advertise to get people to come into town. It’s to boost the town” (*Hoosier* 499).

journey, and her narrative reasserts the same overlaying of modernity onto rurality found in *A Hoosier Holiday*. Puttering along New York's roads at about twenty miles an hour, Post revels in discovering "our really beautiful and prosperous country" (39). There are "[w]ell-fenced lands under perfect cultivation; splendid-looking grazing pastures, splendid-looking cows, horses, houses, barns. And in every barn, a Ford" (36-37). Like Dreiser, Post pays homage to the well-managed countryside, and her portrait of the perfectly cultivated land with its robust livestock and "splendid" architecture bubbles with patriotic pride. More interesting, however, is Post's prominent positioning of the Fords. Textually, she sets them apart. Such centering compels the reader to pause and picture the scene: a traditional country setting complete with livestock and barns and, then, a Ford, the key symbol of this moment.

Post's pride in these rejuvenated rural spaces evidences itself in her exuberant portrayal of modern symbols. Her enthusiastic depiction of America's ever-expanding road system illustrates her patriotism and spreads what may be interpreted as the gospel of technological nationalism—a national pride that emerged in the pre-war years and was linked to the promise of innovation and assumptions about America's supremacy. Thus, Post's commentary about the "wonderful, wide and smooth" roads represents a more nationalistic assertion of American superiority than a modest appreciation of the road itself (36). Bragging that American roads are "much better than any in France since the first year theirs were built," Post emphasizes the Americanness of the road and arouses feelings of nationalism at a time when such sentiments were already elevated (36).³⁷ And

³⁷ This boom in American patriotism and pride was a nationwide phenomenon. An article in *Banker's Magazine* dated August 1915 reveals that the citizens of Manchester, NH were experiencing similar feelings of patriotic pride because of a boom in the manufacturing industry there. The city was home to the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company, "the largest textile manufacturing plant in the world" (258). Due to

if her point is too subtle, a subsequent remark unabashedly ties patriotic sentiment to the nation's technological prowess. As she puts it, after seeing America's fine roads: "No one with a spark of sentiment for his own country could remain long indifferent" (37).

In *A Hoosier Holiday*, the road and other symbols of the nation's technological wave are equally important. Dreiser becomes infatuated with the "Tr-r-r-r-r" of the car, and his sustained focus on the road's novelty and beauty essentializes modernity and makes it a necessary component of his American portrait (83). In addition, an emphasis on comfort and prosperity indicates a desire to define the new rural landscape in terms of affluence and convenience. As they enter "the real country," the area between Paterson and the Delaware Water Gap, Dreiser portrays a charming, yet thoroughly modern countryside (35).

This was a wealthy residence section we were traversing, with large handsome machines as common as wagons elsewhere, and the occupants looked their material prosperity. The roads, too, as far as Dover, our next large town, were beautiful—smooth, grey and white macadam, lined mostly with kempt lawns, handsome hedges, charming dwellings, and now and then yellow fields of wheat or oats or rye, with intermediate acres of tall, ripe corn. (35)

the company's "unrivaled growth" and because there were "many other industries of magnitude and importance" in the city, the citizens of Manchester, according to the writer for *Banker's Magazine*, have a "natural pride" when they "point to the Amoskeag Bank building as typifying the growth and condition of" their city (258). While the pride of Manchester's citizens is localized, it is not difficult to see how such pride can become nationalistic considering world events at the time. This article evokes a city-wide patriotism in the same way that Post and Dreiser stimulate national patriotism in their travel narratives. Just as the reporter for *Banker's Magazine* elevates the pride that population of Manchester feels for their city, which is fundamentally tied to the business and manufacturing sectors, by emphasizing American ingenuity and America's technological advances—and then comparing them to Europe's—Post and Dreiser incite similar feelings of national pride, hopefulness, and loyalty. See "A Thriving City." *Bankers Magazine*. August (1915): 258.

That the road literally cuts through the middle of this space and that Dreiser eschews the traditional symbols of rural life—farmers, animals, barns—suggests a retranslation of America’s agrarian landscape in twentieth-century terms. Occasional fields dot the background, but material wealth and manufactured beauty shape this rural scene and others like it.

In addition to re-visioning the countryside, Dreiser strives to assimilate the symbols of modernity into the American consciousness. Morphing the road into a seemingly natural aspect of the landscape, he situates it alongside objects of nature and rural life. Near Binghamton, Dreiser creates an image that seamlessly fuses nature with modern infrastructure when he writes of the “smooth roads, a blue sky, white and black cattle on the hills, lovely farms, the rich green woods and yellow grainfields of a fecund August” (101). Later, Dreiser subordinates Lake Erie’s beauty to the road’s imposing presence and then suggests its seemingly never-ending span.

If anyone doubts that this is fast becoming one of the most interesting lands in the world, let him motor from Buffalo to Detroit along the shore of Lake Erie, mile after mile, over a solid, vitrified brick road fifteen feet wide at the least, and approximately three hundred miles long. As a matter of fact, the vitrified brick road of this description appears to be seizing the imagination of the middle west, and the onslaught of the motor and its owner is making every town and hamlet desirous of sharing the wonders of a new life. (176)

On one hand, the scene celebrates the road. Dreiser’s commentary about its westward expansion calls to mind the philosophy of manifest destiny that had always guided the

nation's growth. In these moments, the glorification of the road and other signs of modernity exemplify what Lawrence Levine calls a "deeply ingrained belief in America's unfolding destiny" (191). And by emphasizing the "wonders of a new life," Dreiser expresses his desire to normalize technological innovation. His descriptions effectively articulate the American fascination with progress and technological advance. Yet, the portrayal also demonstrates his insecurity with modernity and the nation's rapid thrust toward the future. Thus, these same symbols also induce a "haunting conviction that the nation was in a state of decline" (Levine 191). Dreiser's assertion that the road is "seizing" the Midwestern "imagination" communicates a suspicion that modernity is a force of destruction. Meanwhile, his "onslaught" of autos suggests an anxious unease with what seems to be the inevitable—a vitrified landscape and a diminishing heartland.

In *The American Scene*, Henry James refers to such growth as America's "will to grow" (43). However, while James argues that America's expansion occurs "at no matter what or whose expense" (*American* 43), Dreiser "cannot help speculating as to what" America's "future will be" (*Hoosier* 65). Traveling from one small town to another, Dreiser sees a nation caught up in a construction frenzy. Cities were "building, building, building" (95), and he seems to accept that America's future would be, quite literally, a built future. Near Wilkes-Barre, he reports that he came "suddenly upon one of the most entrancing things in the way of a view that I have ever seen" (56). The scene thoroughly exemplifies the modern moment. According to Dreiser: "Low hanging clouds, yellowish or black, or silvery like a fish, mingled with a splendid filigree of smoke and chimneys and odd skylines" (57). He notices "tasteless low red houses or sheds in the immediate foreground," and sees "[i]mmense mounds of coal and slag with glimpses of distant

breakers” (57). Finally, in the “middle distance a tall white skyscraper stood up, a prelude, or a foretouch to a great yellowish black cloud behind it. A rich, smoky, sketchy atmosphere seemed to hang over everything” (57). Contrasting Wilkes-Barre’s smokiness and “low” houses with the tall whiteness of the skyscraper, Dreiser creates a scene where a definitive symbol of the twentieth century literally towers over—and clashes with—the traditional landscape. The gray lowness of the scene seems ominous, while the pristine sturdiness of the lone skyscraper suggests the promise of a new era. However, the reference to the skyscraper as a “prelude” to yet another “yellowish black cloud” implies that modernity is not necessarily transformational. For Dreiser, despite its promises, this new era holds the potential for obscure, difficult times.

Tourism, Travel Writing, and the Making of America

Dreiser’s image of a thoroughly modern nation with “comfortable telephone booths,” soaring skyscrapers, and the “general air of sound prosperity—even lush richness” captures the spirit of 1915 America (61). He clearly wants to signify America as a modern wonder. At the same time, by emphasizing “smooth” roads, good hotels, and scenic byways, Dreiser attempts to generate a touristic impulse among his readers, a desire to get out and explore the nation (61). He addresses concerns about the physical act of travel and argues that America is not only worth seeing, but that the landscape can accommodate such passage. Thus, Dreiser’s commentary serves as a possible response to those critics who maintained that American travel is uncomfortable and difficult.³⁸ A

³⁸ Emily Post’s narrative addresses this same issue. Her journey exemplifies her effort to travel “comfortably” across America (4). Post reports that, as she planned her trip, one of her friends contacted the “Lincoln Highway Commission asking if road conditions and hotel accommodations were such that a lady who did not want in any sense to ‘rough it’ could motor from New York to California comfortably”

Hoosier Holiday, then, elucidates the relation between the production of culture, tourism, and travel writing. Alfred Bendixen and Judith Hamera suggest that “travel and the construction of American identity are intimately linked” (1). John F. Sears similarly explains that America’s “cultural identity was not given by tradition but had to be created” and that “tourism played a powerful role in America’s invention of itself as a culture” (*Sacred* 4).³⁹ A review of leisurely travel clarifies these points. Customarily, Americans traveled to Europe to see famous architecture, historic artifacts, and great art. According to popular opinion, such could not be found in their native land. However, in 1869, Americans were given a reason to tour their own land—not necessarily because the country had suddenly developed “culture,” but because the completion of the transcontinental railroad gave them a way to tour. Setting out to explore the wild regions of the West, to see the Rocky Mountains, and to cross the wide-open Plains, Americans rushed to purchase tickets on the Pacific railroad. For many, the excursion became a rite of passage.⁴⁰ By the turn of the century, a national debate arose over the value of European travel. Some maintained that travel abroad “qualified” Americans “to see the natural wonders and beauties of his own land as well as its economic features, with a keener eye and a better judgment” (“Going” 587). Others, like the manager of the Grand Canyon’s Bright Angel Trail, argued: “We have scenery here that far surpasses the rest of the world, and yet the majority of our visitors are foreigners. What fools our people are to

(4). Throughout her narrative, Post returns to this theme, and she even closes the book with a chapter entitled “How Far Can You Go in Comfort?”

³⁹ In *The American Scene*, James writes about the nation’s vigorous efforts to produce “with the greatest possible activity and expedition, an ‘intellectual’ pabulum after its own heart” (337). Noting that “the draftsman” has been joined by “the journalist, the novelist, the dramatist, the genealogist” and “the historian,” James is astonished by America’s seemingly conscious attempt to construct both culture and ethos (337).

⁴⁰ For a full discussion of the Pacific Railroad’s opening and of the advent of tourism in America, see Marguerite S. Shaffer’s *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940*.

run over other lands and go into raptures over what they see, before they visit the grander scenery of America” (qtd. in Bronson 1132).

The year 1906 ushered in the See America First campaign, marking the beginning of a joint commercial and political attempt to boost national tourism. The organized effort failed to gain traction, but the phrase itself, “See America First,” was adopted by the newly emerging American travel industry. In 1912, it became the title of a magazine published by A. L. Sommers, a publisher in Tacoma, Washington.⁴¹ According to Sommers, the goal for *See America First* was “to tell the story of America in a dignified, truthful and entertaining manner and to so enthuse the people of this country that they will want to See America First, that is the mission of this endeavor” (qtd in Shaffer 31). Even later, in 1915, the Panama-Pacific International Exposition effectively used the phrase as a marketing tool for promoting Western travel. According to Marguerite S. Shaffer, the exposition was “meant to provide physical proof of this emerging American empire” (35). As she explains, the exposition “drew attention to the triumph of the United States as a modern urban-industrial nation-state,” and it “implicitly and explicitly championed American nationalism” (35-36).

The role of tourism and travel writing in the defining (and re-defining) of American culture, then, cannot be overstated. In the narrative of his 1914 cross-country journey, *Abroad at Home*, Julian Street attempts to reshape perceptions of the nation’s cultural ethos by promoting American art galleries and by emphasizing the rise of

⁴¹ In addition, *Puck* magazine (published from 1871-1918 in New York City), played host to an advertising campaign sponsored by a variety of railroad companies including the Pennsylvania Railroad, the Northern Pacific Railroad, New York Central Lines, and Great Northern Railway. These advertisements, which ran from January 1911-June 1913 featured various natural and scenic wonders across America and portrayed the country as a site of adventure and serene landscapes. Moreover, the editors of *Puck* included occasional one-page cautionary cartoons that humorously warned Americans about the dangers of failing to tour their own country. While the cartoons were tongue-in-cheek, the combination of advertisements and cartoons nonetheless underscored one’s patriotic duty to “see America first.”

American art. He wanted to change how Americans viewed Europe and its art. Street laments that “many American students of the arts continue to believe that there is some mystic thing to be gotten over there which is unobtainable at home” (32). Echoing Emerson, Street proclaims: “we must learn not to accept blindly as we have in the past,” and he attempts to cast America as a cultural mecca by cataloguing the nation’s most important art museums (32). Street, who is not “impressed” by the mere “sound of the word ‘Europe,’” celebrates those galleries that have broken with the tradition of purchasing “European art which was in many instances absolutely inferior to the art produced at home” simply because it is European (32, 33). He lauds the Chicago Art Institute because its “pictures are varied and interesting, and American painters are well represented” (142). According to Street, the gallery houses one of the world’s most “important collections” (142). He also claims that The Art Museum of St. Louis “must take a high place among the secondary art museums of the United States” because it “is rapidly acquiring works by some of the best American painters of to-day” (220). Street’s sustained focus on the nation’s art museums provides cultured Americans with a reason to tour their own country. No longer do we need to travel to Europe for great art; it is here, scattered across the nation. Moreover, Street interprets the increased representation of American artists in these galleries as a definitive assertion about American art: It is gaining popularity. Museums showcase it. It must be good. Although Street does not provide sufficient evidence to prove the superiority of American art, that his travel narrative so forthrightly celebrates it indicates his intent to challenge and transform perceptions of the nation’s art culture.

In *A Hoosier Holiday*, Dreiser likewise constructs a narrative of travel that attempts to reshape perceptions of American culture. His portrayal of the nation's technological and commercial endeavors resonates with the national campaign to promote American ingenuity and superiority. Already, in a passage excised from *A Traveler at Forty*, Dreiser had stated that "the most significant thing you can predicate of a man or a nation is his or its ability to do something new, virile, vigorous, forceful, exceptional—above all, artistic" (*Traveler*, 2004 ed., 638). Such remarks communicate how Dreiser measures culture. In *A Hoosier Holiday*, he structures his American portrait around these same traits. Although he essentially disregards art, likely because he does not stop at any art museums along the way, it is not implausible that, for Dreiser, the nation's technological triumphs equate to artistic achievements.⁴² Marketing America as a nation of advance and conveniences, he specifically emphasizes the vigor and force of the nation. According to Dreiser, America is nothing if not exceptionally new and vigorous. At one point, he dares his readers to: "Show me a country abroad in which you can ride by trolley to the distance that New York is from Chicago, or a state as large as Ohio or Indiana—let alone both together—gridironed by comfortable lines, in such a way that you can travel anywhere at almost any time of the night or day" (61). Such assertions serve a number of purposes. They demonstrate how tourism itself can serve as a tool for exploring and comprehending modernity. They reveal Dreiser's assumptions about the nation's technological superiority, and his intense focus on transportation suggests a

⁴² Dreiser is not alone in this tendency to elevate technological advance over artistic achievements. According to Louise Collier Willcox, who writes in 1914, "roads are of greater consequence now than history or art" (611). Attitudes toward travel and culture had changed, especially in America. The new "motto" of travel, to borrow Willcox's language, was: "Let the dead past bury its dead" (611). Dreiser, in *A Hoosier Holiday*, seems especially willing to do just that when he examines America as a national space. Rather than seeking out the past, Willcox claimed, travelers had to "adapt themselves" to "the passing present," to accept, in other words, the ephemeral nature of the present moment (611). See Willcox's "Travel." *North American Review* 199 (1914): 609-11.

desire to modify and reshape perceptions of America and American travel. Finally, his descriptions construct an image of a strong and powerful nation. With an emphasis on construction, commerce, invention, and force, Dreiser thoroughly posits America in masculine terms and imagines it as a leader and conqueror on the world stage. In each instance, his travel narrative indicates the relation between tourism and the national ethos and reveals how national identities are formed.

Travel also provides Dreiser with a platform for challenging and transforming conventional ideologies and attitudes, and he interprets the malleable genre as a vehicle for delivering his opinions on everything from religion and politics to marriage and sexuality. In *Sister Carrie*, he had already presented his theories about the “forces which sweep and play throughout the universe” (60). Similarly, his contention in *Jennie Gerhardt* that “the accidental variation from a given social practice does not make a sin” did much to dispute extant perceptions of the fallen woman. (93). In these texts, such philosophizing momentarily disrupts the fiction—the story—and indicates an intent to contest traditional ways of thinking. In his travel writing, Dreiser’s pontificating serves a similar purpose but, because he situates the discourse within a text that self-consciously reflects and evaluates the American character, the effect is amplified. In his fiction, the philosophical intrusions are measured, and the tone is even. Words can be attributed to the narrator, suggesting Dreiser’s narrative distance. In non-fiction travel writing, the “I” of the text is Dreiser. There is neither narrative nor emotional distancing, and philosophical interjections frequently disrupt the journey and almost always indicate Dreiser’s anxiety over America’s conventionality.

Early in *A Hoosier Holiday*, Dreiser presents what he sees as evidence of America's overzealous commitment to religion, and he determinedly seeks to change that. The celebrated evangelist, Billy Sunday, who toured the nation and preached Christianity from 1897 through 1935, had recently held "an evangelical revival" in Paterson (Dreiser *Hoosier* 29). According to Dreiser, Sunday "had addressed from eight to twenty thousand people at each meeting in a specially constructed tabernacle and caused from one to five hundred or a thousand a day to 'hit the trail,' as he phrased it, or in other words to declare they were 'converted to Christ,' and hence *saved*" (29). Later, Dreiser watches the "Sunday school parade" of children and their "serious looking mothers and elders . . . all celebrating, presumably, the glory and goodness of God" (30). The scene, he confesses, "invariably causes me to scoff" (30). For Dreiser, there is something incongruous about America as "an exceedingly intelligent land . . . with its far-flung states, its fine mechanical equipment, its good homes and liberal, rather non-interfering form of government" and the nation's dogmatic devotion to religion (182). He warns of "those who, in the name of a mystic unproven God, would seize on all your liberties and privileges, and put them in leash to a wild-eyed exorcist romancer of the type of Peter the Hermit" (183). Then, he frantically urges his fellow Americans to: "Shut up the churches, knock down the steeples! Harry them until they know the true place of religion,--a weak man's shield!" (184). Dreiser alleges that religion is a frightening and dangerous power in America, and his remarks reveal an anxious desire to change the nation's religious environment. And while Dreiser's exploration of religion fulfills his personal quest to challenge conservative ideologies, the inclusion of such comments in his travel narrative, a genre ostensibly reserved for documenting one's journeys, indicates

the ethnographic purpose of *A Hoosier Holiday*. Dreiser's observations, though clearly biased, play a key role in his interpretation of the nation and its people. His images of revivals, traveling evangelicals, and Sunday morning church-going rituals provide a glimpse of American culture and how it operates. Not only does he document a physical journey, but he also demonstrates how travel writing can reveal culture, challenge ideological landscapes, and elucidate the relation between the individual and culture.

America v. Europe

Although the See America First campaign challenged assumptions about the nation as a site for travel and although Dreiser strives to boost perceptions of the nation's technological capabilities, notions about America's barren cultural landscape persisted. In particular, the belief in the cultural influence and superiority of Europe (and especially England) remained intact. Put simply, many Americans still believed that Europe was the seat of art and culture. But that is not to say that such ideas went unchallenged. Julian Street contests views of America's art culture in his *Abroad at Home*, and Dreiser goes even further in his travel narratives and theorizes about America's influence on England. He claims that America unquestionably influences English life and society. In an expurgated chapter from *A Traveler at Forty*, Dreiser writes about discovering numerous advertisements in London for American products, and he argues that the "best" prototype of the English department store "was an American idea" (2004 ed., 157). In addition to American marketing, retail concepts, and products, Dreiser claims that English vaudeville theater, particularly the Shepherd's Bush Empire, had been "built and conducted on the

latest American plan” (157). He concludes that the performances are “second-rate,” but he

could see from this what England would have still been like if it had not been for the rise and influence of the United States. This whole city and nation had been and is still being shot through with American influence, and this theater in which we were sitting and the second-rate American act which they applauded so vociferously was simply a testimony to the youth and novelty of the American world which they crave. (159-60)

Watching English patrons in an American-inspired theater exuberantly applaud American performers suggests a significant cultural shift—in Dreiser’s opinion. Perceiving an English desire for America’s cultural offerings, Dreiser’s national pride swells as he boldly declares that “England will unquestionably be made over radically by United States experience” (*Traveler*, 2004 ed., 160). Although his publishers cut the preceding comments from the final edition, the 1913 *A Traveler at Forty* still re-vision the power structure governing the relationship between America and England. First, Dreiser catalogues a number of modern American conveniences found in England: “telephones, the telegraph, the electric light, the streetcar, the complicated American plumbing system with its convenient baths, the stock ticker and other mechanical ingenuities” (157). Then, he claims that such devices “have been completely revolutionizing England” (157). This appropriation of American culture and technology, in Dreiser’s opinion, reverses the flow of influence. Although Europeans (and perhaps many Americans) would hardly consider vaudeville and technological advance “culture,” Dreiser wants to suggest they are, in fact, a significant indicator of such. His travel narratives indicate the rapid transformation of

culture in the early twentieth century, and he argues that America, not Europe, is now its producer and distributor.

The patriotic banter in *A Traveler at Forty* reassures readers that America is superior, that it “was, after all, the best country in the world in which to live” (Melton *Mark* 45). However, Dreiser’s enthusiastic declarations also demonstrate an anxiety related to the so-called “inadequacies of American culture and society by contrast with European, especially English, culture and society” (Mulvey 6). To overcome these negative stereotypes and to re-imagine national identity, Americans often used juxtaposition, negation and, at times, ridicule when writing about their journeys abroad. Dreiser undoubtedly relies upon these tactics, as does Nathaniel Hawthorne in *Our Old Home*. As he sees it, the English “think so loftily of themselves, and so contemptuously of everybody else, that it requires more generosity than I possess to keep always in perfectly good humour with them” (x). Henry James, in his 1887 *Hawthorne*, attributes an “exaggerated, painful, morbid national consciousness” to Hawthorne’s “unsophisticated” portrayal of England (153). Arguing that Hawthorne consistently asserts his status as “an outsider,” James maintains that Hawthorne is ever “a stranger” who “always lacks the final initiation into the manners and nature” of the English. This assessment also accurately describes Dreiser in Europe (152). According to James, “Americans are, as Americans, the most self-conscious people in the world,” a remarkably cogent characterization of Americans when they travel (153). While in Europe, Dreiser and Hawthorne (and Cather, too) remain keenly aware of their outsider status. They struggle against an exaggerated awareness that America is “the youngest of the great nations,” is not a member of “the European family,” and has been “placed on

the circumference of the circle of civilization rather than at the centre” (James *Hawthorne* 153). Suffering from an anxiety of national consciousness, these travelers constantly proclaim their American-ness, their *otherness*, and perpetuate their alienation. Their fractured conception of national identity “replaces,” or shatters what James calls “that quiet and comfortable sense of the absolute, as regards its own position in the world, which reigns supreme in the British and in the Gallic genius” (*Hawthorne* 154).

The anxiety that travelers have over the relation between America and Europe and which evidences itself in narratives of foreign travel also appears in books about domestic travel. One could claim that in the latter, this type of nationalistic discourse and pontificating would seem rather gratuitous. After all, in the absence of Europe, America could be perceived and measured in its own right. However, Americans continually demonstrate a need to compare their nation to Europe even when writing about home. As Amy Kaplan explains, “domestic metaphors of national identity are intimately intertwined with renderings of the foreign and the alien” (4). In the national consciousness, then, the American landscape, culture, and experience is necessarily comprehended against a European backdrop. To quote Melton, Americans “define their place and identity in relation to (or, more accurately, in opposition to) Europe” (*Touring* 221). Even as they traverse their own land, explore and create their own sacred sites, and construct a cultural identity, Americans look back to the Mother Land. For the American traveler, Europe is never absent.⁴³ It is always, already there, and the anxiety of national consciousness perpetually reveals itself in American travel writing.

⁴³ For the English, America remains firmly situated as a vital aspect of the future. H. G. Wells, in *The Future in America*, confesses that “Our future is extraordinarily bound up in America’s, and, in a sense dependent on it” (13).

For example, Albert Bushnell Hart, in his 1916 “See America First,” evokes Europe twice in an article that promotes American tourism. “Mount Ranier is finer than Mont Blanc,” he proclaims, “the Yosemite far surpasses the Engadine; Niagara has no rival this side of the Zambesi” (938). While these comments proclaim the superiority of America’s physical landscape, the success of the juxtaposition depends upon the assumed supremacy of distinguished European (and African) landmarks. In *A Hoosier Holiday*, Dreiser also heavily relies upon a European foil. In his celebration of American vitality, for example, he disparages European tradition and culture. He willingly concedes that “from the point of view of patina, ancient memories, and the presence of great and desolate monuments,” Europe is superior (61). However, America is “actually better than Europe. And why? Well, because of a certain indefinable something—either hope or courage or youth or vigor or illusion” (128). Youthfulness, energy, and a lack of history represent America’s defining traits for Dreiser. Europe, by contrast, is “dead, dead” (169). Thus, in Buffalo, Dreiser proclaims that America represents “life . . . only here nothing has happened as yet, historically; whereas there, men have fought to and fro over every inch of ground” (169). Europe, as he sees it, lacks the

youth of a great country. America, for all its hundreds and some odd years of life, is a mere child as yet, or an uncouth stripling at best—gaunt, illogical, elate. It has much to do before it can call itself a well organized or historic land, and yet humanly and even architecturally contrasted with Europe, I am not so sure it has far to go. Contrasted with our mechanical equipment, Europe is a child. (61)⁴⁴

⁴⁴ In terms of technology, Dreiser’s assertions of America’s superiority were well-grounded. Industry in America exploded at the end of the nineteenth century, and American output dwarfed its European

Cultural assumptions regarding the history of Europe and the non-history of America remain intact and unchallenged in these comments. However, Dreiser does not gauge culture by the past. He posits a new standard where technology represents the measure of a nation. By declaring America's technological preeminence and then labeling Europe "a child," Dreiser challenges negative connotations associated with America and disputes assumptions that a nation's supremacy is related to its historical narrative.⁴⁵ Still, the comments reveal Dreiser's transparent attempt to inflate American accomplishments and dethrone European achievements. In the end, the juxtaposition underscores suppositions of Europe's dominance and reiterates the anxiety over America's perceived inadequacies.

Great American Wonders

In his 1900 *America: Picturesque and Beautiful*, Joel Cook produces a thorough record of the nation's most outstanding sights. He tours the "great" Chesapeake Bay (6), visits Washington DC's "crowning glory," the Capitol (12), and marvels over Chicago's Union Stock Yards, which he claims "make a complete town, with its own banks, hotels, Board of Trade, Post-office, town hall, newspaper and special Fire Department" (437). Providing meticulous description, historical data, and positive evaluative commentary, Cook constructs a comprehensive guide to the nation's most important landmarks. He effectively refutes the notion that America has nothing to offer the tourist. Because of Cook's artful presentation, the youthful American nation seems to possess history,

competitors. According to Alan Trachtenberg, raw steel production increased to almost five thousand tons in 1890, up from thirteen tons thirty years prior; the production of steel rails increased ten times from 1860-90; and production in the agriculture industry tripled from 1870-1900 (52). See *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1982.

⁴⁵ This is a point that H. G. Wells agrees with. In *The Future in America*, he writes that America "is decades in front of Europe, in mechanism, for example, and productive organization . . ." (180).

beautiful architecture, and great cities. In *A Hoosier Holiday*, Dreiser avoids these conventional sites and opts to pursue physical representations of America's promise and economic prowess.⁴⁶ Although his route takes him far from Cook's beaten path, Dreiser constructs a specific American ethos by pointing out symbols of the financial world. His portrayal of these landmarks reveals the relation between American architecture, his patriotism, and his anxiety over the national narrative.

As they make their way toward Pennsylvania, Dreiser and Booth come upon a "great" canal that had once been used for transporting coal (32). The canal "was very familiar" to Dreiser because he had "walked every inch of it from New York to the Delaware River during various summer holidays" (32). But rather than pausing to reminisce, his interest lies in the canal as a historic though "now entirely obsolete" artifact of American progress (32). Walking beside the canal, Dreiser discovers "an old moss-covered, red granite block three feet square and at least eight feet long, on which was carved a statement to the effect that this canal had been completed in 1829, and that the following gentlemen, as officers and directors, had been responsible" (31). As he reads the names, "Adoniram this, and Cornelius that," Dreiser notes that their "carved symbols were now stuffed with mud and dust" (31). The canal, "costing originally fifty million dollars," is "beautiful" but "useless" (32). Even its "record" is buried "under dust and vines" (32). Such a stark discovery highlights the uncertainty of the future and

⁴⁶ Coincidentally, Dreiser journeys to Indiana during the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, an event that ran from February 20 through December 4, 1915. The exposition celebrated American progress and western expansion, and provided a unique opportunity to expand American tourism and solidify the nation's place on the world stage. Emily Post attended the event and, in *By Motor to the Golden Gate*, she struggles to convey the immensity of the fair. Her attempt to portray the exposition results in a chapter that essentially serves as little more than a catalogue of the fair's sights. In the end, Post avows: "Of course you can't see the Fair in a day, or two days, or three" (239). For more information on the exposition, see Lipsky, William. *San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition*. Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2005.

illustrates how easily America's accomplishments can turn to ruin. That the memorial itself is covered in moss suggests that it, too, has been forgotten. Thus, the canal and its tablet come to represent fallen symbols of America's technological promise. Dreiser's portrayal of the canal chronicles how it fell victim to capitalist forces: a "powerful railroad corporation" "destroyed" the canal (32). Now, according to Dreiser, it is "rarely if ever used by boats" (32). It is "still ornamented at regular intervals with locks and planes," but only "ducks and swans float on its surface and cattle graze nearby" (32).

The portrayal of the antiquated canal represents Dreiser's only portrait of real failure in *A Hoosier Holiday*. Any other instances of American demise in his narrative are purely fabricated. Possibly, the canal's decline creates an anxiety over the nation's legacy and inspires a need to ensure that America's technological endeavors do not fade into silent ruin. Thus, Dreiser celebrates the nation's built landscape, and his architecturally-inspired patriotism is most evident in a chapter entitled "Railroads and a New Wonder of the World" (94). Standing before an unfinished though towering bridge near Nicholsen, PA, Dreiser describes "a thing so colossal and impressive that we had Speed stop the car so that we might remain and gaze at it" (94). As he looks on "in a kind of awe," Dreiser is confident that he now stands before what would someday be remembered as a "monument to the American of this day which would be stared at in centuries to come as evidencing the courage, the resourcefulness, the taste, the wealth, the commerce and the force of the time in which we are living—now" (94). Though only a barely finished construction project, the bridge holds such imagined potential that Dreiser presents it as an example of America's architectural achievements. He argues that "America has already produced" a number of "great wonders," among them: "a statue of Lincoln in

Chicago, a building by Woolworth in New York, a sea wall at Galveston, an Ashokan dam in the Catskills, this bridge at Nicholsen” (94, 95). And he confidently asserts that “in times to come there will be thousands of these wonders—possibly hundreds of thousands where now there are hundreds” (95). In tying the nation’s commercial monuments to its identity and legacy, Dreiser reconstructs the national ethos, building it upon the greatness promised by these towering structures.

However, the prospect of national failure lurks in Dreiser’s mind. Images of America’s demise often accompany these patriotic portrayals of the nation’s landmarks. This anxious optimism materializes when he admires the newly constructed skyscrapers in Wilkes-Barré. He interprets the structures as “inevitable evidences of America’s local mercantile ambitions, quite like the cathedrals religionists of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries loved to build” (62). Such remarks indicate the potential that Dreiser sees in these edifices and reveal how he connects these sites to the national narrative. Perhaps some day, he seems to hope, people will know America by its skyscrapers in the same way that they know Europe by its cathedrals. But those ancient structures are ruins, and Dreiser’s optimism is tinged by fears about what he sees as the inevitable fall of America. Thus, he imagines that

when America is old, and its present vigor and life hunger has gone and an alien or degenerate race tramp where once we lived and builded so vigorously, perhaps visitors from a foreign country will walk here among these ruins and sigh: ‘Ah, yes. The Americans were a great people. Their cities were so wonderful. These mouldy crumbling skyscrapers, and fallen libraries and post offices and city halls and state capitals! (62)

On one hand, Dreiser's remarks could be satiric. Imagining that America's greatness will be preserved in ruins that commemorate two of the institutions that he most distrusts—democracy and capitalism—suggests that his portrait could be more a thinly-veiled criticism than an assertion of America's greatness. Additionally, the scene could serve as a subtle indication of Dreiser's anxiety if he believes that the nation is building its future on corrupt institutions that will eventually fail. Or, perhaps he would rather see museums as the symbols of the nation's greatness. In *A Traveler at Forty*, he had already asserted that he could "not see why" ancient "churches should not be turned into libraries or galleries" (410). According to Dreiser: "Their religious import is quite gone" (410). Although the comment clearly iterates his disdain for religion, it also states his preference for institutions that house history rather than those that are in and of themselves symbols of history. Still, the patriotic tone of *A Hoosier Holiday*, along with Dreiser's determination to identify the national character, suggests that his comments about America's "crumbling skyscrapers" and other commercial ruins are not altogether meant to be ironic. More likely, these apocalyptic imaginings reflect his apprehension over the nation's fate, and his sighing tourists reveal his desire to secure America's future and legacy.

At the same time, Dreiser's intense focus on demolished commercial structures suggests his fears that capitalism will fail and that the promise of democracy and economic opportunity will fade away. He was already keenly aware of the ever-increasing divide between the haves and the have-nots in America, and his own brushes with poverty and deprivation no doubt increased his sensitivity to the issue. In 1903, he explained that his duty as a writer compelled him to expose "the vices of wealth as well

as the vast unspoken blackness of poverty and ignorance” (“True Art” 469). *Sister Carrie*, *Jennie Gerhardt*, and *The ‘Genius’* candidly illustrate such “blackness” and what was then unspeakable. In the same way, Dreiser’s travel narratives reveal a penchant for exploring the gritty crevices of life. In *The Color of a Great City*, he provides a stark portrayal of men moving through New York’s bread lines and describes a homeless woman, a “bencher,” as he calls her, “stuffing old newspapers between her dress and her breast to keep warm” (217, 218).

A Hoosier Holiday follows this same pattern. He records a brief encounter with a young, down-on-his-luck man in a Geneva Beach, Ohio restaurant. The man, as Dreiser tells it, approaches him and strikes up a conversation. Out of money, the man hopes that he “might get something to do” in the restaurant (209). Initially, Dreiser thinks, “I’ll not give him anything. I’m tired of it. I did not come in here to be annoyed and I won’t be” (210). Nonetheless, Dreiser’s “rage wilted” (210). Confessing that he is “touched” by the young man’s “youth, his strength, his ambitions, the interesting way he had addressed me,” Dreiser “handed” the stranger “a bit of change” (210). Dreiser then wishes that he “had more means and a kindlier demeanor wherewith to serve difficult struggling youth” (210). On a personal level, the young man’s condition undoubtedly reignites agonizing memories of Dreiser’s own Hurstwood-esque brush with hunger, hopelessness, and homelessness in 1903. He recognizes “the face that one always puts on the in presence of menacing degradation” and remembers those harsh “times when I was seeking work” (210).⁴⁷ At the same time, the account personalizes poverty and resists the silencing stereotypes of the nation’s poor.

⁴⁷ For the full narrative of Dreiser’s dark days in 1903, see *An Amateur Laborer*. The book was written in 1904 but was not published until 1983 by Pennsylvania UP.

Yet, Dreiser resorts to these same stereotypes in an upscale Terre Haute restaurant. Gazing out the window, he remarks that “the streets of this city suggested” the “tribes and shoals of the incomplete, the botched, the semi-articulate, all hungry and helpless, who never get to come to a place like this at all” (399). When he imagines the homeless women who wander these streets, he focuses on “their shabby skirts, their shapeless waists, their messes of hats, their worn shoes, trudging to and from one wretched task to another, through the great streets and the splendid places” (400). That Dreiser emphasizes their movement, their barely comprehensible speech, and their ragged clothing—not even their bodies, save their waists—thoroughly dehumanizes these women and relegates them to utter silence. Unlike the hopeful young man in Ohio, the homeless women that Dreiser describes in Terre Haute are nearly phantoms. Even though he offers no evidence that he actually sees these women, he still asks, “Haven’t you seen them. . .?” (400). According to Dreiser, the streets “suggested” their presence (400).

By contrast, representations of urban poverty in other Dreiserian texts go much further than these sanitized portrayals. In *Sister Carrie*, destitution is a palpable part of the New York street scene, and Dreiser forthrightly recreates the “daily spectacle” of men waiting “like cattle” for handouts at Sixth Avenue and Fifteenth Street (343). In *The Color of a Great City*, he writes that the bread-line is “as healthy and vigorous a feature of the city as though it were something to be desired” (129). In his opinion, it has become “a sight, an institution, like a cathedral or monument” (129). Such dramatic displays of urban poverty serve as stark reminders of the brutal reality of destitution, and Dreiser uses his writing—both fiction and nonfiction—to remind his readers that poverty has become a commonality of American life. It is a necessary part of his American portrait.

However, his treatment of poverty in *A Hoosier Holiday* makes it almost possible to deny that such suffering exists at all, at least in Terre Haute. Even the depiction of the young man in Ohio keeps the desperation of poverty as a safe distance. The ethereal existence of the impoverished in *A Hoosier Holiday* likely stems from a dual desire to linger in the prospect of a prosperous, thoroughly democratic nation and to preserve the idealized image of his hometown.

In addition, Dreiser uses his travel narrative as a space to examine the broader issue of class warfare in America, and he specifically focuses on the skirmishes between those who finance the nation's architectural wonders and those who build them. Although he lauds America's prosperity, the struggles associated with that success haunt Dreiser, and images of the labor battle continually disrupt his narrative. With nearly every modern structure that he celebrates, Dreiser painfully remembers the "division" and violence that fuels the nation's labor battle (181). In Buffalo, a city "devoted to great factories and corporations and their interests," he detects "the great division that has arisen between the common man and the man of executive ability" (181). Likewise, at a newly constructed bridge over the Passaic River, he gazes at the mills that line the shore and recalls the "great strike that had occurred two years before" (27). During that strike, "all sorts of nameless brutalities had occurred, brutalities practised by judges, manufacturers and the police no less than by the eager workers themselves" (27).⁴⁸ Later, Wilkes-Barre evokes

⁴⁸ Dreiser is referencing the Silk Strike of 1913, which began in February and ended unsuccessfully in July of the same year. According to one report, strikers lost up to \$5.5 million in wages, "and the manufacturers were out probably as much" ("End" 780). Entire families were driven from their homes. There were more than fourteen-hundred arrests and five deaths. For more information, see "The End of the Paterson Strike." *Outlook*. 9 August 1913. 780. The strike involved approximately twenty-five thousand individuals, and demands included an eight-hour work day and a minimum payment of \$3/day. For more information regarding the strike, see "Darkest New Jersey." *The Independent*. 29 May 1913. 1190-92. Gregory Mason, in "Industrial War in Paterson," provides an overview of the strike itself, reports the events leading up to

the memory of “the great anthracite coal strike in 1902 . . . one of the fiercest and best battles between labor and capital ever seen in America” (58).⁴⁹

Still, Dreiser clings to his desire to portray a peaceful, picturesque America. He calls Paterson “a beautiful city in the creative sense—a place in which to stage a great novel” (26). Wilkes-Barré is likewise “beautiful” (58). It “gave evidences of real charm. The buildings were new, substantial and with a number of skyscrapers” (61-62). Nonetheless, the history of class warfare clashes with the idealized façades of these towns. Dreiser cannot remove the violent history from his mind, and he believes that: “Posterity will long remember this time” when “a strange race of men with finance for their weapon were fighting as desperately as ever men fought with sword or cannon” (58-59). Although he refuses to relate the grisly details of the Paterson and Wilkes-Barré strikes, a stark contrast to his treatment of the Brooklyn strike in *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser is finally unable to master his anxiety.⁵⁰ Within the safety of his imagination, he creates an epic battle that combines his distress over labor with his desire to create a national narrative. Out of that conflation, Dreiser visualizes a massive labor battle that spans the

the strike, and considers the relation of Socialism to the strikers. See his article in *Outlook*. 7 June 1913, 283-87.

⁴⁹ Dreiser’s estimation that the Anthracite Strike of 1902 is more than accurate. A. Maurice Low, author of “How the Coal Strike Was Ended,” referred to the incident, which lasted from May-October 1902, as “the greatest industrial struggle the world has known” (2563). Low provides a detailed discussion of how the strike ended in his article, located in *The Independent . . . Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and Economic Tendencies, History, Literature and the Arts*. 30 Oct. 1902. 2563-66. Information regarding the beginning of the strike and events throughout the strike may be found in “News of the World.” *The New York Observer and Chronicle*. 22 May 1902. 686. “The Coal Strike.” *Current Literature* 33 (1902): 3-4. Finally, for information on the events leading up to the strike, beginning in April 1901, please see “No Coal Strike.” *The Independent . . . Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and Economic Tendencies, History, Literature and the Arts*. 4 April 1901. 750-51.

⁵⁰ In *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser dedicates an entire chapter to Hurstwood’s experience as a strikebreaker. The violence and brutality associated with the strike are carefully articulated, and Dreiser even portrays the involvement of women and children. It is a stark contrast to his treatment of strikes in his travel narrative. At its most basic, the material in *Sister Carrie* advances the plot and reveals the level of Hurstwood’s abasement, but it also conveys the real brutality and violence associated with the labor war in America. Rather than including such murky material in his travel narrative, Dreiser opts to explore these skirmishes in the realm of fiction. Such a tactic could serve to ease his anxieties and allow Dreiser to imagine his own ending for the labor war.

continent and culminates in the brutal execution of a key labor organizer and his supporters. Such a battle, Dreiser believes, could create legends.

How would it be if one could say of Buffalo that in 2316 A. D.—four hundred years after the writing of this—there was a great labor leader who having endured many injuries was tired of the exactions of the money barons and securing a large following of the working people seized the city and administered it cooperatively, until he had been routed by some capitalistic force and hanged from the highest building, his followers also being put to death? Or suppose a great rebellion had originated in New Mexico, and it had reached Buffalo and Pittsburg in its on sweep, and that here an enormous battle had been fought—an Austerlitz or a Waterloo? How we should stare at the towers as we came across this plain! How great names would rise up and flash across the sky! We would hear old war songs in our ears and dream old war dreams. (170)

Projecting his tale four hundred years into the future suggests that Dreiser sees no real end to the labor battle. But that is not his real concern here. He imagines the legacy of that final, epic battle with eerie jubilation. Such a clash would, perhaps, end class division. Yet Dreiser's excitement stems from thoughts of the illustrious war stories that could stem from such a conflict. Of course, the Civil War had already provided America with a war narrative. Already, the nation had "great names" of war, as well as statues memorializing those who fought. Dreiser encounters some of these symbols during his trek to Indiana; however, these commemoratives fail to evoke the same euphoria as his own apocalyptic battle. In Pennsylvania, when he sees "a number of old soldiers idling in

the shade,” he irreverently wonders how they “should be so numerous at this day and date” (137). According to Dreiser, it was “more” than he “could understand” (137). Such comments hardly suggest respect for their service. He wonders why these elderly veterans are still alive, a comment that suggests a subtle rejection of their legacy. Similarly, in Cleveland he recalls “looking at a great soldiers’ monument . . . and wondering why so large a monument?” (228). He “could not recall that any man of Cleveland particularly distinguished himself in the Civil War,” an assertion that denigrates their service, repudiates the legacy of the conflict, and belies Dreiser’s grandiose notions about war (228).

Although his imagined uprising obscures his anxiety over social injustice, Dreiser detects a clear relation between class warfare and American democracy. The Paterson and Wilkes-Barré strikes transpired during what he calls the “great days of the capitalistic struggle for control in America” (58). In Dreiser’s estimation, these historic struggles jeopardized democracy. As he sees it: “Individual liberty among the masses was being proved the thin dream it has always been” (59). Others shared this sentiment. Two years before Dreiser’s return to Indiana, Amos R. E. Pinchot identified the most important “struggle of today” as “the economic conflict between the few who are rich, strong and organized, and the many who are poor, weak and unorganized” (188). According to Pinchot, “the successful outcome” of America’s “momentous war” and the “triumph of American democracy” could only be achieved through the “equitable adjustment of intolerable economic conditions” (188). Such observations resonate with Dreiser’s concerns. But while Pinchot appears to have faith in democracy, concerns about its fragility exacerbate Dreiser’s anxieties.

In *A Traveler at Forty*, Dreiser suggests that: “We ought to get a little ‘Imperialism’ in our government” (473). As he sees it, America’s “boasted democracy has resulted in little more than” granting “the privilege” to be “rude and brutal” to one another. Pointing his finger at the wealthy and powerful, he remarks: “And I blame it all on the lawlessness of the men at the top. They have set the example which has been most freely copied” (*Traveler* 518). He continues: “Our early revolt against sham civility has . . . resulted in nothing save the abolition of all civility—which is sickening” (518). Such comments clearly indicate Dreiser’s disgust and fears over democracy and, in *A Hoosier Holiday*, he ominously predicts that the experiment will ultimately fail. There is, he believes, a “too unbreakable rule that democracy, equality, or the illusion of it, is destined to end in disaster. It cannot survive ultimately, I think (512). Admitting that he is “in favor of the dream of democracy, on whatever basis it can be worked out” (279), he hopes that “this tremendous, bubbling Republic” will “live on” (512). Yet, the final pages of *A Hoosier Holiday* return to the apocalyptic vision of a ruined nation. He speaks of the “dreams and the memory” of the “free and equal” Americans, and then refers to America as “a wondrous memory” (512). Such comments note both the failure of democracy and the nation’s ultimate destruction. Neither celebrating the names flashing across the sky nor sighing over the ruins, Dreiser thinks only of “historians of far distant nations of times unborn” who will someday speak solemnly about the “great continent” that was once America (512).

The Threat of Immigration

But Dreiser's societal concerns are not just grounded in economics. *A Hoosier Holiday* also indicates his anxiety over immigration. From 1881-1900, nearly nine million immigrants entered the United States. From 1901-1910 another six million entered the country. Such influxes dramatically altered the face of America and threatened what many considered the country's homogeneous society and cultural landscape. Elinor H. Stoy warned in 1907 that "the vast hordes pouring into" the nation "are alien to us" (234). According to Stoy, they represent "a motley crowd collected largely from the slums of the old countries . . . ignorant, poor, often vicious and degraded" (234). This type of commentary casts the immigrants as *other* and posits them as a threat to American society. Additionally, it reveals the distress caused by their presence. Sociologist Sarah E. Simons, in her 1901 "Social Assimilation IV," attempts to quell these fears. Calling the United States "a homogeneous nation striving after a common ideal," Simons assures her readers that America possesses "a wonderful power of assimilating its various ethnic elements into one whole" (393). To that end, a number of social programs were launched to ensure assimilation. As Max Kohler claimed in 1914, such programs would guarantee the "quick and healthy absorption of the immigrant" (100).⁵¹ Institutions such as the YMCA and the Italian Immigrant Bureau, according to Kohler, were doing "effective work in Americanizing the immigrant, finding employment for him at good wages, overcoming tendencies towards congestion, effecting distribution, and promoting acquisition of American standards of living and thinking"

⁵¹ In 1929, when Mexican immigrants were entering the United States in large numbers, Americanization campaigns continued. Pearl Idelia Ellis, of the Department of Americanization and Homemaking, published *Americanization through Homemaking*, a book aimed at teaching American domesticity to Latina immigrants in the U. S.

(107).⁵² These programs and institutions demonstrated a national desire to reach a specific cultural goal: the “creation of a homogeneous people, through unity of speech, community of interests, and unity of social and political standards and ideals” (Simons 402). Put differently, the assimilation programs, many hoped, would hasten the obliteration of the new arrivals’ cultural traditions, guarantee their allegiance, and ensure the survival of a so-called homogeneous America.

Whether the immigrants were fully assimilated into the national culture or not, many Americans believed that their presence would irreversibly transform the nation. For those threatened by immigration, the mere presence of the foreign element created a damned if you do, damned if you don’t situation. Whether they assimilated or not, it was believed, the nation was in a perilous position. As Amy Kaplan explains, the “incorporation of alien races,” it was believed, “would introduce a kind of anarchy into the unity of the nation,” while the “unincorporated annexation,” could “turn the republic into a tyrannical empire” (7). In each “imagined scenario,” the nation morphs into a “monstrous hybrid creature, either a mixture of alien races or a foreign form of government ‘engrafted’ on the republic” (7). Not surprisingly, the fears persisted. H. C. Kegley posed this question in 1910: “Which is to be Stronger—Our Influence Upon the Foreigner, or His Influence Upon Us” (10). Ominously, he announces that the “foreigner” is “everywhere” (10). According to Kegley, they “are coming in ever-increasing

⁵² Henry Ford also launched his own “Americanization” practices at the Ford Motor Company. He required his immigrant workers to attend classes that taught English and other American ways of living. During the “graduation ceremonies,” they wore their native attire and then “walked through a big pot labeled ‘melting pot’ and emerged in business suits holding American flags” (Feagin 26). See Feagin, Joe R. “Old Poison in New Bottles: The Deep Roots of Modern Nativism.” *Immigrants Out!: The New Nativism and the Anti-immigrant Impulse in the United States*. Ed. Juan F. Perea. New York: New York UP, 1997. 13-43.

numbers,” and he worries about the “influence of this vast mass of undigested, if not indigestible material upon our national and religious character” (10).

Henry James exhibits similar anxiety over immigration. During his 1904-05 tour of America, he visited Ellis Island and expressed great consternation at the number of immigrants there. In *The American Scene*, he confesses that he feels as if he “has eaten of the tree of knowledge” (66). The experience, he confides, “shakes him—to the depths of his being,” and he feels a “new chill in his heart” (66). James interprets this mass arrival as an invasion. As he puts it, “the idea of country itself underwent something of that profane overhauling through which it appears to suffer the indignity of change” (67). For James, their entry is tantamount to a “free assault upon” the city of New York and America itself. He seems tormented by “this readjustment of it in *their* monstrous, presumptuous interest, the aliens, in New York, seemed perpetually to insist” (67). That James seeks out such violent language to convey his impressions suggests that the encounter has proven fatal to his sense of the national ethos. Something about the American character has been lost, even degraded by the immigrant presence and, by the end of his Ellis Island tour, James experiences a “sense of dispossession” that leaves him feeling “haunted” (67).

While such aggressive language does not exist in *A Hoosier Holiday*, Dreiser is no less apprehensive about immigration. But unlike Kegley and James, Dreiser attempts to conceal his anxiety in rhetoric that echoes popular assimilationist attitudes of the day. Early in the narrative, after admitting to having read magazine articles on the subject, Dreiser forthrightly articulates the nativist conviction that “America, east, west, north, and south, was being overrun by foreigners who were completely changing the American

character, the American facial appearance, the American everything” (48). However, based on observations from the road, he proclaims that immigrants “were not unamericanizing the cities, and I was not prepared to believe that they were doing any worse by small towns” (49). Because of this, he “began to take heart” (49). Rather than wondering if the amalgam of races will be a “witch-broth” (Kegley 9), Dreiser hopefully predicts that the robust American character would not only prevail, but wash away those alien characteristics and tendencies. Like many others, he worries that the European *other* “will change the nation’s appearance and character,” and he wants to see the immigrants quickly transformed into Americanized, American citizens (Totten 37). Thus, Dreiser’s descriptions often reveal an intent to demystify the aliens and “contain” their “difference” (Totten 37).

When Dreiser returns to the Thralls Mansion in Warsaw, where he lived during his adolescence, he finds that his former home has been transformed into a tenement. Four families now live there—one is Slavic and another is Hungarian. Of the “stocky and somewhat frowsy woman of plainly Slavic origin” whom he first meets, Dreiser only states that she spoke “pleasantly” to him after “hearing of my mission” (302). Of the “young married woman” who “spoke English plainly,” Dreiser indicates that she “seemed of marked Hungarian extraction, an American revision of the European peasant, but with most of the old world worn off” (306).⁵³ He reconstructs their domestic environment,

⁵³ In *The Color of a Great City*, Dreiser constructs a very different portrait of Hungarian immigrants. The piece, entitled “The Toilers of the Tenements,” first appeared in April 1902 in *Success* and was republished in *New York Call Magazine* on 24 August 1919. In the article, Dreiser portrays a Hungarian immigrant family, a father, mother, and daughter, who live in a New York City tenement and take in sewing. They earn barely enough money to survive. They contrast greatly with the young family that Dreiser encounters in Terre Haute and, unlike the Americanized immigrants depicted in *A Hoosier Holiday*, this immigrant family retains their foreignness. They continue to speak in their mother tongue, and the unclean nature of their building reinforces the most degrading stereotypes about immigrants. However, the piece also exposes the complicity of “the law” and government in the oppression of Eastern European immigrants in America

emphasizing their clean but slightly cluttered houses, and their young, sleeping children. Dreiser's descriptions relate to conventional portraits of American women and families, and the scene serves to ameliorate fears of cultural takeovers. More, such portrayals reassert Dreiser's earlier observation that "America seemed to me to be making over the foreigner in its own image and likeness" (68).

Just as he renders immigrant women and their home life in a way that highlights domesticity and intimates their American-ness, Dreiser similarly seeks to depict male immigrants as fully assimilated members of society. He reports that these boys "gather on street corners when their parents will permit them, arrayed in yellow or red ties, yellow shoes, dinky fedoras or beribboned straw hats and 'style-plus' clothes" (68-69). Dreiser maintains that "they can't resist the American yellow shoe, the American moving picture, 'Stein-Koop' clothes, 'Dreamland,' the popular song, the automobile, the jitney" (69). According to this confident Dreiser, they "are completely undone by our perfections" (69). Such dandified descriptions suggest that there is no difference between these boys and their American counterparts. By white-washing the immigrant population, Dreiser attempts to preserve the idealized conception of the nation's homogeneity and assimilative powers. However, the commentary about this unmarried male immigrant population also acknowledges their sexual energy. They are not just hanging around street corners. They are girl-watching, and Dreiser imagines them exclaiming, "Say, you should have seen the beaut that cut across here just now. Oh, mamma, some baby!" (69). In some ways, Dreiser's casual commentary appears almost stereotypical. These are boys

(89). When juxtaposed to his portrayal of immigrants in *A Hoosier Holiday*, the piece utterly shatters the hopeful image of America and immigrants that he so carefully constructs in his travel narrative. Still, "The Toilers of the Tenements" forthrightly conveys Dreiser's sympathies for these immigrant families as well as his frustration with the unjust system that perpetuates their difficulties.

doing what boys do. By demonstrating their eager willingness to adopt America's cultural signifiers—clothing, cars, music—Dreiser implies the robustness of American society and suggests that the “foreigner” really is incapable of resisting assimilation. “These immigrants are conformists,” he seems to say. However, Dreiser's descriptions constantly remind his readers that these American-clad boys are foreigners. Further, by pointing to the sexual nature of their pastime, even if they are only looking, Dreiser reasserts fears over the corruption of American culture and the “homogenous” American bloodline.

His comments in an Ohio restaurant even more forcefully assert such anxieties, but this time the distress is related to the growing Asian population in America. John Holladay Latané takes up this issue in 1914 and explains why Asian immigrants are unlikely to assimilate into American society. In “Our Relations with Japan,” Latané repeatedly characterizes Japan as “aggressive” and argues that:

the Japanese springs from a historical environment which has no traditions in common with ours, that he has an intense pride of race and nationality, that his standard of living is different from ours, and that, notwithstanding the fact that he has remarkable powers of adaptability, it is very doubtful whether he has either the desire or the capacity for assimilation. (600-01)

Such commentary not only asserts the otherness of Japanese immigrants, but also nearly guarantees a Japanese invasion of American culture.⁵⁴ By questioning their ability and, more importantly, their seeming unwillingness to assimilate, Latané strongly implies that

⁵⁴ There was also concern regarding the safety of the government during this period. Fears that immigrants and colonies, such as Puerto Rico, would depose “the whole structure of the government” loomed (qtd in Kaplan 8). As Amy Kaplan explains, some Americans “imagined foreigners as the bearers of revolution and anarchy with the power to overthrow” the government (8).

the Japanese presence will remake America. Unlike Dreiser's European immigrants, who seemingly strive to assimilate, Latané's Japanese migrants inherently resist adopting American culture and ideology.⁵⁵ That supposed resistance increases the already-heightened sense of anxiety that many Americans felt about the Japanese, leading to irrational fears of cultural takeover, intermarriage, and miscegenation, a particularly anxiety-ridden subject. In 1909, a writer for *The Los Angeles Times* cautioned that the "intermarriage of persons of different races is considered extremely inadvisable by sociologists" ("Miscegenation" 114). The failure rate for such marriages, the writer posited, was increased because "there is a small chance for couples of different races to be happy" (114).⁵⁶ This same thinking likely led to the 1913 decision by Nebraskan lawmakers to issue a state-wide ban against marriages between "whites and any person who has one-eighth or more of Japanese, Chinese, or negro blood" ("Miscegenation Penalized" 14).

Dreiser's commentary in *A Hoosier Holiday* suggests that he is less concerned with the supposed refusal of Japanese immigrants to assimilate than with the issue of miscegenation. As he sits in B. Kagi's Ohio diner, Dreiser wonders if his waitress is of Japanese descent. He remarks that she "looked like an Americanized product of the Flowery Kingdom," and he "asked her if she was Japanese" (233). According to Dreiser, "I never got a blacker look in my life. For a moment her dark eyes seemed to shoot sparks" (233). Her terse response: "Certainly not" (233). That she "talked in the normal middle West fashion" and Dreiser's own conclusion that she must have been "born and

⁵⁵ Ernest J. Reece, in "Race Mingling in Hawaii," offers an alternative perspective of the issue. See his article in *The American Journal of Sociology* 20 (1914): 104-16.

⁵⁶ For the dissenting opinion, please see "Professor Urges Miscegenation." *New York Tribune*. 19 August 1909. 4. Bryce, James. "America Revisited: The Changes of a Quarter-Century." *Outlook*. 1 April 1905. 846-55.

raised in this region” provides evidence of her belonging (234). Yet, Dreiser remains incapable of accepting her as a fellow American, and he insists that the young woman bears a strong resemblance to B. Kagi (234). Then, in his “worst and most suspicious manner,” Dreiser wonders: “But why the likeness?” (234). Despite all contrary evidence, he feels confident of a familial connection. Convinced that she is indeed B. Kagi’s “American born” daughter,” Dreiser surmises that Kagi, “for reasons of policy,” is the young woman’s “concealed father” (234). Then, venturing to construct “a kind of fictional background for her,” he continues filling in the details until he “had quite a short story in mind” (234). While Dreiser’s impressions of the young woman and Kagi effectively belie those arguments posited by Latané, this barely-there narrative of miscegenation reasserts their threat and reiterates cultural anxieties associated with Asian immigrants and others in the early years of the twentieth century (234).

Shattered Illusions and the (Re)construction of the Self

The roads between New York and Indiana provided Dreiser with numerous opportunities to see America and obtain the material that he needed to construct his portrait of the nation. By focusing on the transformation of physical, cultural, and social landscapes and by highlighting some of the most pressing issues of the day, Dreiser provides a thorough characterization of 1915 America. But this journey represents more than an opportunity to gaze out at this modern-day nation. It is also an intensely personal pilgrimage into the past, the self, and memory. In *Dawn: An Autobiography of Early Youth*, Dreiser writes candidly about his youthful dreams and ambitions, his fraught relationship with his father, and the family’s financial struggles. The years 1879-1882

were an especially difficult period. Young Theodore, Edward, and Claire had relocated with their mother to Sullivan and, according to Dreiser, they suffered from “extreme poverty” (48). In those dark days, they rented the Basler House, a “plain little white house,” for seven dollars a month, and Dreiser remembers it as an “anachronistic and painful home” (48, 40). Although the “land” was “prosperous enough in an agricultural sense,” the “whole vicinity,” as he remembers it, was “shabby and down-at-heels” (43). Images of shoeless children eating their meals off of “a few borrowed plates” and sleeping on “straw-filled mattresses” intensify Dreiser’s descriptions of the scene (48). While such remarks emphasize the family’s trials and tribulations, they also indicate Dreiser’s desire for autobiographical verisimilitude. He vows on the first page of *Dawn* that the book “is—as they say in law—to the best of my knowledge and belief” (3), and he claims that “these very sincere impressions and transcriptions are as nearly accurate as memory can guarantee” (4).

In *A Hoosier Holiday*, Dreiser continues to write autobiographically. However, the travel narrative reveals his willingness to revise and retranslate memory. The 1915 text lays bare an exceedingly altered portrayal of the same house and period. The Basler House, in the modified version, is “charming” (17). Instead of white plainness, there is a “large lawn, in which roses flourished, and with a truck garden north of it and a wonderful clover field to the rear (or east) of it” (17). What’s more, a “wonderful veil of clouds” that appears “too wonderful for words” shrouds the pain formerly associated with the house. No longer stung by the shabbiness of the locality, Dreiser proudly testifies that “corn and wheat and hay and melons grow here in heavy, plethoric fashion” (17). The scene stands as a significant revision of his original portrayal, and it conspicuously

obscures the difficulties that the family faced there. He finally confesses that they “were apparently desperately poor,” yet the word “apparently” casts doubt on that fact, and the comment reaffirms Dreiser’s longing to escape the harsh realities of the past (*Hoosier* 420). *A Hoosier Holiday* was envisioned as a tribute to the “sweet harmonies of memory with all the ills of youth discarded,” and the (re)presentation of the Basler House indicates how steadfastly he clings to that goal (18).

As Dreiser demonstrates, travel is simultaneously physical and psychological. The body crosses borders, examines landscapes, and gazes at new scenes while the cognitive and emotional self processes the material and links the experience to the traveler’s already-existing narrative of self. For Dreiser, the physical return to Indiana occurs alongside an inward voyage into the depths of memory and personal history. This cognitive journey necessarily affects his notions about his personal narrative and identity, and it alters his perception of the world and his place in it. As such, the “retreat” into memory fulfills one component of what Foucault terms “the cultivation of the self,” an ethical and personal “exercise” in which the inner self is nurtured and developed (*Care* 50). During that psychological process, the individual engages in self-reflection and “introspection” in an effort to cultivate one’s character (*Care* 50). According to Foucault, it is “an exercise of the self on the self, by which one attempts to develop and transform oneself, and to attain to a certain mode of being” (“Ethics” 433). For some, as suggested, the cultivation of the self is achieved by an inward retreat. Such an act permits:

one to commune with oneself, to recollect one’s bygone days, to place the whole of one’s past life before one’s eyes, to get to know oneself, through reading, through the precepts and examples that

will provide inspiration, and, by contemplating a life reduced to its essentials, to rediscover the basic principles of a rational conduct.

(*Care* 50-51)

The inward journey is meant to be transformative, and Dreiser intends his return to be exactly that. He aims to alter his state of being by re-situating himself in his past. The cognitive diving into one's past is especially compelling, then. It can provide a fresh understanding of the relation between past and present, and can aid in the comprehension of belief systems and actions. If the evolutionary process succeeds, individuals gain a new comprehension of their sense of self and their duty to society.

However, that inward retreat carries inherent danger. Diving into one's past in this way also makes it possible for an individual to re-member—or distort—negative memories in an effort to ameliorate the pain and anxiety associated with the past. Dreiser's 1915 interpretation of the Basler House demonstrates such re-membering. Moreover, he writes *A Hoosier Holiday* under the influence of nostalgia, and he consciously attempts to recapture his youthful innocence. According to Dreiser, as a young boy, he was “too young and too dreamy to feel the pinch of poverty” (17). As a returnee, he attempts to cloak himself in this same childlike innocence, and he constantly white-washes his past. Yet for Dreiser, this seems natural. He wonders: “Who does not allow fancy to color his primary experiences in the world?” (14). He confesses his guilt and then confides that he has “built up” a number of “illusions” about his “native state” (14). But Dreiser does more than admit that his notions about the past are idealized. He wants his readers to understand why. As he explains:

Sometimes the experiences of delicious years make a stained glass window—the rose window of the west—in the cathedral of our life. These three years in ‘dirty old Sullivan,’ as one of my sisters once called it (with a lip-curl of contempt thrown in for good measure), form such a flower of stained glass in mine. They are my rose window. (18)

Such remarks rely upon “fancy,” subterfuge, and metaphor to obscure reality.

Additionally, references to stained glass and cathedrals suggest that Indiana has become sacred to Dreiser. However, the decision to memorialize his Sullivan experiences in glass suggests the tenuous nature of his relation to the past, and it implies that Dreiser may even foresee or expect the shattering of these very images.

Dreiser’s portrayal of Sullivan reflects his nostalgia, indicates the unreliability of the inward journey, and suggests the fragile relation between personal identity, memory, and place. The physical journey that takes one back to one’s past—an act that puts Foucault’s cognitive exercise into action—affects that same relation. Dreiser’s return to Indiana exemplifies what Rudolphus Teeuwen identifies as “journeys of recovering time” and “experience” (4). Such experiences “pull us back to where we came from (or think we came from),” to borrow Teeuwen’s phrasing (4). Individuals embark upon these pilgrimages filled with hope and nostalgia; however, the return to one’s sacred historical spaces necessarily lays bare the reality of place and the passage of time. Rather than stepping easily into one’s former homeland or birthplace, the returnee must negotiate the breach between illusion, memory, and reality. In *The ‘Genius,’* Dreiser imagines such a return. Eugene Witla goes back to Illinois after living in New York for only sixteen months. Despite the brevity of his absence, being back home reignites his youthful

“moods,” reminds him of his love of nature, and provides artistic inspiration.

Experiencing a return-induced emotional exuberance, his “heart sang over the beauty of yellowing wheat-fields,” and

As he rode the moods of his boyhood days came back to him—his love of winging butterflies and birds; his passion for the voice of the wood-dove . . . his adoration for the virile strength of the men of the countryside. He thought as he rode that he would like to paint a series of country scenes that would be as simple as those cottage dooryards that they now and then passed. (115)

Witla’s return to Illinois evokes memories and feelings not experienced since boyhood. Although he nostalgically indulges in his childhood passion for nature, Witla also seeks to place an artistic distance between himself and his home state. Ultimately, Witla does not imagine that his return will restore his boyhood. Instead, this glimpse into the past provides inspiration and inspires him to creatively bridge the gap between past and present.

Originally conceived and written in 1911, *The “Genius,”* suggests how Dreiser envisions his own moment of reentry into his home state. However, Dreiser is not content to merely gaze upon these sacred sites of his past. Unlike his fictional counterpart, who seeks to contextualize the past within his present, Dreiser claims that he wants to re-immense himself in consciousness of his youth, to become a boy again. He wants “to look, to stand in some of these old places and recover if I might a boyhood mood” (*Hoosier* 330). For Dreiser, then, the return provides an opportunity to escape his present

reality and retreat into his lost boyhood world. Thus, when he approaches “the frontier of Indiana,” he maintains that:

The intervening years fizzled away and once more I saw myself quite clearly in this region, with the ideas and moods of my youth still dominant. I was a ‘kid’ again, and these streets and stores were as familiar to me as though I had lived in them all my life. (261)

Such commentary indicates Dreiser’s attempt to detach himself from more than two decades of his life. While these jubilant feelings seem natural for anyone returning to their childhood home after an extended absence, the remarks in these initial moments suggest a shift in how Dreiser identifies himself. His claims of an instantaneous transformation are, of course, an exaggeration. Still, his words indicate a re-awakening of some lost aspect of his identity. A “kid,” he is not. But, the emotional resurgence of memories and “moods” mimics feelings that he has not experienced since boyhood. In addition, the instant sense of familiarity with the physical space causes Dreiser to feel at home again, as if he had never left. Consequently, Dreiser can believe, if only for a moment, that the return has allowed him to reclaim his lost youth.

However, when Dreiser discovers that the return cannot restore his boyhood, his nostalgic perception of the past begins to crumble. The initial ebullience associated with the homecoming fades rapidly, replaced by an ever-increasing sense of loss. Dreiser forgets that the “conditions, and we ourselves will have changed” (Teeuwen 4). He forgets that time can damage the “original fit” and that, consequently, “we can no longer satisfactorily reenter” the sacred places of our past (Teeuwen 4). Thus, Dreiser laments that his “principle sensation upon entering Indiana and getting thus far was one of

disappointment that nothing had happened, and worse, nothing could happen” (283). In this instant, Dreiser realizes that his “boyhood” days and places have been forever lost, and the futility of attempting to repossess the past becomes clear. At the same time, travel begins to fail Dreiser at this point. Having envisioned his journey as a path back to the past and believing that looking at personal landmarks could transport him to an alternative space, Dreiser reveals his optimism as a traveler and suggests the transformative power of travel.

However, upon reaching the most highly-anticipated stop along his journey, Warsaw, the shock of the altered city abruptly completes the shattering of Dreiser’s illusions. The homes that he once lived in remain, but change overshadows their survival. At the house on Centre Street (the Thralls Mansion), he vividly recalls that there was once a “saw and furniture mill,” a “large grove of pines,” and a “pond of considerable size, on which of a moonlight night, when our parents would not permit us to go further, we were wont to skate” (299). Thirty-three years later, that has all changed. The “sawmill was no longer,” the pond “was filled up, not a trace of it remaining,” and even “worse, the pine grove had disappeared completely” (300). Dreiser’s nostalgic memories have no place here. It is as if the land itself had rejected the past. Viewing the site gives Dreiser “a sharp, psychic wrench which endured for hours and subsequently gave me a splitting headache” (299). Soon afterward, he cries out: “Why do our memories lie so? Could anyone or anything be a greater liar than the average memory?” (321). Such emotional outpourings suggest that Dreiser now discerns the unreliability of memory.

At the same time, he learns that this type of sentimental travel cannot bridge the distance between the past and present. As David Joel Metzger explains, this type of

journey only “broadens” that divide and leaves “childhood at an even greater remove” (42). Though Dreiser feebly attempts to convince himself that he “felt no least interest in the visible scene,” the loss of these landmarks creates an anxiety of personal identity that nearly traumatizes him. He confesses:

somewhere down in myself, far below my surface emotions and my frothy reasoning faculties, something was hurting. It was not I, exactly. It was like something else that had once been me and was still in me, somewhere, another person or soul that was grieving, but was now overlaid or shut away like a ghost in a sealed room. I felt *it* the while I bustled about examining this and that detail. (301)

The assertion of psychological pain and the admission that it was somehow “not I” but something ghostlike that suffers suggests a rupture in Dreiser’s sense of self. John Steinbeck writes about a similar experience in his 1960 *Travels with Charley in Search of America*. After driving thousands of miles from New York to California, he finally reaches his “native place, northern California” (148). Walking along barely-familiar streets, Steinbeck is unsettled by an uncanny sense of alienation. “I was the ghost,” he claims, and he confides that the return had reaffirmed nothing; instead, it had “caused only confusion and uneasiness” (156). Steinbeck’s “place of origin had changed,” and he senses that, because he had “gone away,” he “had not changed with it” (156). Such remarks indicate the anxiety associated with discovering that one’s native space is neither static nor fixed. Steinbeck confesses that in “my memory it stood as it once did and its outward appearance confused and angered me,” a sentiment that Dreiser shared (156). For these returnees, and countless others no doubt, travel seems to promise a path back to

one's past and youth. Yet, their excursions consistently reveal the incongruities between one's memories and the actuality of the space, and indicate how the transformation of place can divide and rupture one's sense of self.

In this type of travel, a cognizant and physical "I" moves through a physical space and views the scene, but the emotional self suffers a nearly debilitating sense of anxiety, loss, and frustration. As Dreiser put it after discovering the 1915 Thralls Mansion, "something else that had once been me" now mourns the loss of the past and of a certain aspect of his sense of self. Andrew Gross recognizes Dreiser's feelings of deracination and rightly observes that Dreiser "realizes," as he revisits his childhood homes, "that he does not belong, that he cannot go back" (113). However, the postulation that Dreiser learns "that there is no intrinsic connection between place and identity" needs to be re-examined (113). I would argue that there is indeed such a "connection." Dreiser's journey back to Indiana serves as a reaffirmation of this sense of self, his history, and his memories. Thus, it is precisely the absence of the sawmill, the grove of pine trees, and the pond that leads Dreiser to feel "psychically wrenched" (301). That he no longer feels whole, but rather ghostlike, demonstrates his utter alienation, his sense of tragic loss, and it clearly indicates the relation between these physical spaces and Dreiser's identity.

The loss and anxiety experienced at the Thralls Mansion follows Dreiser throughout his journey. After the disappointing reunion with Warsaw, he feels that his "old home town had done for me completely—the shadows of older days" (330). He admits that he "was dreadfully depressed and gloomy," and he suffers from a "fine young heartache" (330). Filled with anxious optimism, he sets his sights on Silver Lake, a small town twelve miles from Warsaw, hoping to salvage the journey and alleviate his despair.

As a boy, along with his brother Ed, Dreiser occasionally visited his aunt and uncle at their home there, and he remembers it as “a delightful place . . . to come to, so fresh, so new, so natural—not at all like our ordered home” (328). Although he harbors little hope of finding his long-lost relatives, Dreiser wants “to at least look at that body of water and the fields that surrounded it and the streets with which I had been fairly familiar. The lake had seemed such a glorious thing to me in those days” (329). Unfortunately for Dreiser, the effort to revisit Silver Lake is thwarted when they unknowingly drive past it and realize their error too late.

That Dreiser fails to locate the town or the lake reiterates the loss that characterizes his pilgrimage. Each site that he returns to deepens his anxiety, grief, and despair. So great is the disappointment that he petitions to add “one chamber to Dante’s profound collection in the Inferno . . . one in which, alone and lonely, sits one who contemplates the emotions and the fascinations of a world that is no more” (*Hoosier* 505). Staggering through this self-designed inferno, Dreiser relentlessly pursues his lost past. He continues to use his travels as an attempt to recover his personal landmarks. In Terre Haute, he frantically searches for the house that he was born in, but when he is unable to determine exactly which is his, he calls the search “useless speculation” (405). Later, he recalls a house on 7th and Chestnut Streets “with a swing in the basement where [he] used to swing, the sunlight pouring through a low cellar window” (406). After fruitless searching, he deduces that the home “may never have existed at all,” and the fracture in his notions about the past, his own narrative, and his sense of self deepens (407). Finally, Dreiser realizes that “the youth time that I had spent in Terre Haute had gone and would never come back again” (401). Lost in a maze of memory and myth, he

becomes despondent. When he and Booth “moved on,” Dreiser miserably confides: “I was glad to go. I was getting depressed” (407).

Origins Travel and the Pursuit of the Imaginary

Whether the route takes one to a nation’s birthplace, to the traveler’s hometown, or to an ancestor’s native land, pilgrimages that return individuals to their origins indicate a desire to recover the past and create a past/present continuum. Such journeys may be considered origins travel. Americans who travel to England often do so in an effort to bridge a cultural and historical gap, to discover national origins. William Dean Howells repeatedly traveled to England and toured those “places from which different immigrations had derived” because he wanted “to know these on their own ground” (Howells ix). Two separate texts, the 1905 *London Films* and the 1908 *Certain Delightful English Towns*, chronicle his excursions and record his English impressions. However, in 1909, Howells combined the books and presented the resulting project as “a study of American origins,” an act that suggests his desire to characterize travel as path for discovering one’s national genesis, ancestry, and history.

Dreiser’s own five-month tour of Europe from November 1911-April 1912 replicates this type of travel. He longs to see Mayen, his “father’s birthplace” and “first love” (*Traveler* 430, 431). According to Dreiser, “to his dying day,” his father “never ceased talking about it” (431). Young Theodore grew up hearing stories about “what a lovely place Mayen was, how the hills rose up around it, how grape-growing was its principle industry, how there were castles there” (431). The town had “a wall about the city,” and Dreiser recalls his father telling him that, “as a child he had been taken out

through some of its great gates seated on the saddle of some kindly minded cavalryman and galloped about the drillground” (431). Such renderings make the town seem like the setting of a fairy tale, and Dreiser clearly longs to see this space that evokes so many childhood memories. Thus, after touring England, France, and Italy, the dutiful son makes his way to Germany and travels to Mayen. Hoping “to discover if the family name still persisted there,” he searches a cemetery for long-lost family members and finds gravesites for his uncle and “some other Dreisers” (432, 448). Although his search for living relatives ends unsuccessfully, Dreiser finds solace in the notion that

it was from here that my ancestors had come. I had found at least the church that my father had attended, the priest’s house and garden where possibly the identical cherry-tree was standing—there were several. I had seen the gate through which my father had ridden as a boy with the soldiers and from which he had walked finally, never to return any more. (453)⁵⁷

Dreiser’s pilgrimage to Mayen demonstrates how travel can serve as a tool for establishing a stable link, or an *herkunfian* bond, to one’s past. It renews his relation with his father and, more, it reaffirms his “ancient affiliation” with those who came before him (*Foucault* 81). As an example of origins travel, the journey brings Dreiser into physical contact with his German heritage, reinforces his ties to the “fatherland,” and provides a tactile setting for the stories that Johann Dreiser told him when he was a child. In other words, it fulfills the desire to physically encounter those places perceived as inextricably bound to one’s life story. Departing Mayen “with a sorrowful backward glance,” Dreiser

⁵⁷ Johann Dreiser left in an effort to avoid military duty. After departing Mayen, he never returned for fear of persecution from the Prussian military.

confesses that simply returning to his father's birthplace "was enough. I shall always be glad I went to Mayen" (453).⁵⁸

Origins travel provides an opportunity for individuals to claim anew or even recover their cultural and ancestral heritage. At the same time, it can satisfy the psychological desire to return to what Lacan calls the Imaginary, the psychic order governed by the mirror stage and the development of the "Ideal-I" (Lacan 4). Characterized by idealization, rupture, and loss, the mirror stage foments an anxiety that results in two life-long desires: (1) to achieve the perceived wholeness of the mirror image (2) to escape the sense of alienation created when the child realizes its separation from the mother. In Lacanian thought, the desire to return to this pre-lingual stage of maternal attachment affects all individuals, though in varying degrees.

Dreiser's boyhood days may be seen as an expression of Lacan's Imaginary for two reasons. First, Dreiser possesses an idealized perception of his youth and, second, there is an intense sense of loss associated with the period. To take the appropriation of Lacan's theory even further, we may consider Dreiser's Ideal-I as the image of himself as a boy. The return to Indiana, then, signifies his effort to physicalize Lacan's psychological journey. It represents an endeavor, as Dreiser puts it, "to get back to my mother" (286). For this doting son, there is an undeniable connection between his comprehension of Warsaw and his mother. He even confesses that: "Warsaw, in fact, really means my mother to me, for here I first came to partially understand her, to view her as a woman and to know how remarkable she was" (286). And he continues, "she was

⁵⁸ For more on Dreiser's return to Mayen, including material from the first typescript of *A Traveler at Forty*, see Renate von Bardleben's excellent essay, "The Shock of the Ancestral Quest: Theodore Dreiser's *A Traveler at Forty* and Cynthia Ozick's *The Messiah of Stockholm*." *The Self at Risk: In English Literature and Other Landscapes*. 1999. 95-108.

the center of all my experiences here!” (286). Such assertions reiterate the relation between place and identity. Not only does Dreiser center his mother in his travel narrative, but he makes her the ultimate site of return.

Additionally, Dreiser uses language itself as a path to bring his mother closer. Typically, he writes his recollections in the past tense, but at the Thralls Mansion, he claims that he can “actually see” her “slipping about in her old grey dress working for us, for me, and wishing so wistfully that life might do better for us all” (305, 306). Similarly, when he recounts the day that he and his brother Ed went fishing and brought home their catches for dinner, he remarks: “I can feel my mother’s hand as I lean against her knee and sleep” (435). By evoking the physical act of seeing and touching, Dreiser makes his mother present in a way that narrating these events in past tense cannot. Yet, both the journey and the creative use of language ultimately fail. The irrevocable loss of the Imaginary—signified by the shattering of his idealized notions of the past—and the severing of his Ideal-I from his present sense of self create an enormous amount of anxiety. Yet in the end, he experiences an even greater aspiration to reclaim the past, even though he already understands that the past is lost. That desire, as Alan Sheridan explains, is both “excentric and insatiable” (viii). For the devastated Dreiser, the emotional journey is far from over, and his desire to “get back” remains quite unsatisfied. Even as he leaves Warsaw, he confesses: “I wanted to go back to Warsaw and stay there for a while—not the new Warsaw as I had just seen it, but the old Warsaw. I wanted to see my mother and Ed and Tillie as we were then, not now, and I couldn’t” (334).

At the end of the journey

In 1918, three years after his return to Indiana, Dreiser published “The Old Neighborhood,” a tale about a wealthy, unnamed protagonist who travels back to the small town where he and his first wife, Marie, lived with their two sons twenty-four years earlier. Just as Dreiser had “touched, helplessly, on every pleasant and unpleasant memory that [he] had known” in Indiana, his protagonist similarly rambles through his old neighborhood remembering his long-lost adoration for Marie and their mournful life together (*Hoosier* 506). As he walks, the protagonist recalls his youthful dissatisfaction with life, his impatient desire for advancement, and his feelings of desperation after “three long months” of joblessness (“The Old” 238). Back then, he considered himself a modern-day Job. He distinctly remembers that fateful moment when he felt “ready to curse God and die” (238). He had wished “in a violent, rebellious, prayerful way” that he was “free” of his marriage and family (238-39). Little more than a month later, both of his sons had become infected with “their final illness,” pneumonia, and died (240). He and Marie separated, and he relocated to Boston to pursue “his dreams of bigger things” (222). He promised to return, but never did. Years later, he has amassed his fortune, remarried, and started another family. Then, he learns that Marie has fallen victim to pneumonia and died penniless in their old neighborhood. Laden with remorse, he rushes back, hoping to alleviate his anguish and assuage his guilt. But returning does not bring catharsis. Unable to reconcile his past and present, the protagonist flees in his car.

The feelings of alienation and loss that haunt the protagonist of “The Old Neighborhood” have a clear relation to Dreiser’s own feelings as he rambled through his old neighborhoods in 1915. In the tale, the unnamed protagonist confesses that, at one

time, he believed in “the alleged *fixity* or changelessness of things” (“Old” 235). Now, at the end of his journey, “all thought of fixity in anything had disappeared as a ridiculous illusion intended, maybe, by something to fool man into the belief that his world here, his physical and mental state, was real and enduring, a greater thing than anything else in the universe, when so plainly it was not” (235). Such sentiments relay the feelings of Dreiser’s protagonist, but they just as readily indicate Dreiser’s own despair during the Indiana trip. He shares his protagonist’s intense bereavement over the past, and the story itself indicates the haunting disconnect between the past and present. At the same time, the tale suggests Dreiser’s continued struggle with feelings of deracination and the sense that his identity has been ruptured three full years after his fateful return to Indiana. “The Old Neighborhood” could serve as his attempt to reconcile those feelings.

At the end of his own homecoming, Dreiser confesses that he was “glad” to be leaving Indiana (505). As he puts it, “It was as though I had been to see something that I had better not have seen” (505). The “whole region,” he now believes, “was haunted for me” (505). Later, he boards a train and speeds back to New York, an act that situates him in a space of physical in between-ness, neither in his home state nor in his present home. In this liminal space, he is, on one level, homeless. In many ways, the return has left him in a state of psychological homelessness: his identity shaken, his illusions shattered, and the knowledge that his personal landmarks have been destroyed or dreadfully altered. The journey transformed Dreiser’s relation to the past, to Indiana, and to the nation itself. Having completed a tour characterized by change and loss, the difficult challenge of bridging the gap between what has been lost and the new sense of reality remains. And, Dreiser must negotiate all of these things with his new understanding of America, for his

two-thousand mile journey from the streets of New York City to the fields of Indiana was not merely a journey of the past, but also of the present and future.

European Eyes, American Sites:

The Problem of Tourism in Henry James's *The American Scene*

In "The Jolly Corner," a tale written when the impressions of his 1904-05 American tour were still fresh in his mind, Henry James introduces Spencer Brydon, a man who returns to his native New York after a thirty-three year absence. On what is ostensibly a business trip, Brydon has come back to New York "to look at his 'property'" (372), and yet the journey represents something far more intimate than that. Brydon wants to revisit "his house on the jolly corner, as he usually, and quite fondly, described it—the one in which he had first seen the light, in which various members of his family had lived and had died, in which the holidays of his over-schooled boyhood had been passed and the few social flowers of his chilled adolescence gathered" (372). The trip is a response to a nostalgic impulse, a sentimental desire to see and recover the landmarks of his youth. He even revisits the "ugly things of his far-away youth" and claims that "these uncanny phenomena placed him rather, as it happened, under the charm" (372).

But a desire to see the sights also motives Brydon's return. After living in Europe for more than three decades, Brydon believes that modern America holds the promise of strange and wonderful new things. Like "thousands of ingenuous enquirers every year," he had "come over to see" this New World (372). Brydon never imagined such awe-inspiring and anxiety-inducing transformations. In Europe, he asserts, it "would have taken a century . . . to pile up the differences, the newnesses, the queernesses, above all the bigness, for the better or the worse, that at present assaulted his vision wherever he looked" (371). As he surveys this new landscape of his native New York, Brydon notes

that the “‘swagger’ things, the modern, the monstrous, the famous things” unsettle him and increasingly become “sources of dismay” (372).

The episode is easily interpreted as a thinly-veiled account of James’s own return to America after a two-decade absence. Like Spencer Brydon, James experiences moments of recognition and apprehension throughout his journey, and he demonstrates a Brydonesque desire to surround himself with familiar sights. Like his fictional counterpart, James approaches New York hoping to detect a bit of his past among the “chaos of confusion and change” (5). As he gazes out at the “waterside squalor of the great city,” James rediscovers nearly forgotten aspects of his native scene, and he wonders how “the same old sordid facts” that plagued the waterside all those years ago are not only still there, but have been “too serenely exempt from change” (5). Even the “ugly items” that should have crumbled from “their very cynicism” persist, and the “rude cavities, the loose cobbles, the dislodged supports” remain (6). To James, they all seem “confoundingly familiar” (6). He finds an odd comfort in their survival, and their existence suggests that there is a place for him here as well. These whispers of the past offer reassurance during the early hours of James’s return, and he admits to floating through the first two days of his trip on an “easy wave” (8).⁵⁹

Unfortunately, such nostalgic sweetness quickly fades. In a consideration of imposed displacement, where individuals are forced from their native land, George Robertson remarks that the “dream of home and eventual return is shattered at the

⁵⁹ James’s remarks made upon re-entering New York call to mind another return, to Turin, which he writes about in *Italian Hours*. In “From Chambéry to Milan,” James, the “old friend of Italy,” refers to his return to the Italian city as “an easy waking for dormant memories” (123). Writing sentimentally about the process of becoming reacquainted with the city, James claims that “[e]very object is a reminder and every reminder a thrill” (123). According to James, “every pleasure and every impression I had formerly gathered from Italy” is awakened by the simple and wonderful act of returning (123).

longed-for moment of re-entry” (3). Such sentiments are no less relevant to those, like James, who attempt to repatriate themselves after an extended voluntary absence. In “The Jolly Corner,” Spencer Brydon’s homecoming culminates in a moment of “incalculable terror” that leaves him lying prostrate on the floor (385). James’s “wave” also crashes, leaving him feeling lost and alienated. All around him, buildings holding sentimental value and history were razed, and newly erected structures transformed the cityscape and obscured the scenes of former days. In New York, Boston, Cambridge, and even in those places where James has no personal history—such as Richmond, South Carolina, and Florida—the past has been brushed away, and America seems to have embarked upon a project to reinvent itself. The changes are deeply disturbing, and James struggles with what Freud identifies as the uncanny, the feelings that emerge when something once familiar becomes a source of apprehension. The returning traveler thinks of the native environment as static and unchanging throughout time. It remains, always, a representation of the way things were. Upon re-entry, however, the effects of time and the results of change become evident, and what was once perceived as home seems foreign and unrecognizable. Much, if not everything, that the traveler once associated with the site has changed or vanished and, although the area is recognizable, there is an unsettled feeling of being lost and alone.

The anxieties associated with James’s return serve as my point of departure for this chapter. Any attempt to analyze his tour of these uncanny spaces must begin with an acknowledgement of James’s sense of loss and distress in America. Moreover, the clash between the past and present, between how James wants to tour and how he can tour in America emerge as critical themes in this analysis. Thus, this chapter does more than

reassess James's anxiety. It provides a better understanding of how James operates as a tourist. Brydon complains that New York "assaulted his vision" (371). His "eye" is unaccustomed to that scene and, indeed, to America itself. Because he has grown accustomed to viewing the Old World, Brydon struggles to acclimate his eye to this new America. James, too, grapples with how to look at America when one's mood is nostalgic and one's perspective is European. It represents the single most important issue in this chapter. Each section probes the relation between James's travel aesthetic and his actual experience of touring the nation and explores his touristic response to this strangely familiar place. The early sections examine James's approach his natal land as a sentimental tourist in search of beauty. Topics of discussion include the relation between James's theory of travel, the destruction of familiar spaces, and the new architecture; his subject position as an urban tourist; his foray into New York's immigrant communities; and his treatment of America's business travelers. This part of the discussion focuses extensively on how the traveler's gaze functions in *The American Scene*. The latter parts of the chapter examine James's resistance to modern-day touring and his attempt to use tourism as a means of escaping modernity and situating himself in the safety of the past. The discussion here concerns itself with analyzing James's travel aesthetic in more detail, evaluating the European model of touring that James typically relies on, and determining how that model serves and/or fails him in twentieth-century America.

The Nostalgic Tourist

Letters written prior to his tour reveal James's desperate longing to return to his native ground. In a letter to his brother William, James affirms that it "is my conviction

that nothing but the jealousy of the gods in the form of some grave accident will keep me—*can* keep me—from embarking. So I am treating the matter as a prayed-for certainty” (*Letters* 307). Confiding in his friend William Dean Howells, James likewise confesses a longing to see the sites of his youth again. “I *want* to come quite pathetically and tragically,” writes James, “it is a passion of nostalgia” (qtd. in Edel *HJ: A Life* 588). The sentimental tone of these letters is reflected in James’s descriptions of his most sacred landmarks, and *The American Scene* demonstrates his intent to view these boyhood spaces through an idealized lens. However, the America of 1904 was in the throes of change, and traveling there was a voyage into modernity, not a retreat into history. Mammoth structures such as the *New York World Building*, the St. Paul Building, and Park Row tower over the city and make it seem frighteningly unfamiliar, while demolition and new construction sites bring an uncanny strangeness to sites that James has fond memories of.

James’s tour of New York takes him to Trinity Church, a site which he describes as “supereminent” and “pointedly absolute” in *A Small Boy and Others* (35). For James, it is “the finest feature of the southward scene” (35). But now, the landmark is “so cruelly overtopped” that it is “barely distinguishable” (*American* 61). James’s journey to Trinity Church serves a dual purpose. It represents recovery travel and sentimental tourism. James embarks upon this pilgrimage to recover a sense of his past and to reconnect with the city of his birth. In this way, his excursion resembles Dreiser’s return to Indiana. Just as Dreiser hopes that travel can serve as a means of regaining the youthful past that he feels he has lost, James, too, hopes that this stop at Trinity Church will help him to retrieve something familiar in this new New York. As a child, he attended the church

with “the elder Albany cousins,” an event that was an “indulgence making their enjoyment of our city as down-towny as possible” (*Small* 35). Now, James confides that he can “commune with it, in tenderness and pity,” a comment that expresses his emotional connection with the site and reveals his desire to resurrect an aspect of that old relation (*American* 61). In such moments, James’s narrative takes on the intimate quality typically reserved for autobiographical writing, and this blurring of the lines between travel writing and personal narrative indicates James’s understanding of this journey as a personal voyage. Dreiser writes about the dangers of recovery travel in *A Hoosier Holiday*, and he tells other nostalgic travelers that while it is “very well to dream of revisiting your native soil and finding at least traces, if no more, of your early world . . . it is a dismal and painful business” (283). Physical spaces, Dreiser observes, “undergo a mighty alteration. Houses and landscapes and people go by and return no more. The very land itself changes” (283). That James now struggles to see these once-familiar environs as they once were reveals a desperate longing to find a place where America as he knew it survives. For James, in that small space where the physical scene and his memories meet, history and the modern moment coalesce. That is the apex of travel, but that type of journey, as both James and Dreiser discover, consistently fails.

But recovery travel also fails in another way. Rather than creating a union between the past and present, it reinforces the acceleration of time. As Dreiser approaches Warsaw and begins to “recognize familiar soil,” he is emotionally assailed by the number of years that have passed. He becomes painfully aware that it has been thirty years since he was last in the town. Overcome with despair, Dreiser lashes out at the “remorselessness of time” and confesses to feeling “an ugly resentment toward all life

and change, and the driving, destroying urge of things” (283). He feels “a sudden, overpowering, almost sickening depression at the lapse of time and all that had gone with it” (284). While Dreiser expresses his anxiety over the fleeting nature of youth and the demise of “friends and pleasures and aspiration” (284), James’s excursion to Trinity Church marks the passage of time and the passing of his beloved nineteenth century. The realization “produced at once a horrible, hateful sense of personal antiquity,” and although these journeys provide a glimpse of one’s sacred spaces, they are incapable of fostering the nostalgic reunion that restores youth and the past (*American* 63).⁶⁰ James’s remarks speak to a loss associated with the framework of one’s life, of history and sacred landmarks. His “shrine” is lost “in the vast and exquisite void”; it is now “but an institution of yesterday” that would be enveloped by the “hotel-spirit and exhaling modernity at every pore” (339).

But James’s visit to Trinity Church represents more than a personal journey and an attempt to recapture a sense of the past. His descriptions also reveal his subject position as a tourist with a nostalgic gaze, and his futile pursuit of classical architecture in America really begins at Trinity church. James returns to gather “impressions,” and he clearly expects—or at least hopes—to discover scenes of transcendent splendor (3). He

⁶⁰ That James’s sacred landmarks have receded into a background of “white towers, all new and crude and commercial and over-windowed” make his efforts to bridge the gap between the past and present a nearly insurmountable challenge (64). Ugo Rubeo, who also has examined James’s desire to resituate himself within New York, suggests that the “material destruction upon which the city keeps on renewing its look makes it impossible for [James] to recognize the familiar aspects of the old town” (17). As Rubeo puts it, the physical transformation of the city “prevents even the possibility of a backward glance through memory” (17). Without a path by which James can rediscover nineteenth-century New York, he is compelled to wander about in an uncanny natal space, where he catches occasional glimpses of the past but is essentially exiled to an uncertain middle zone. Stuck in a place where he can neither find entry into the new scene nor return to the old, James moves about in what Justin Edwards calls a “paradoxical space,” a space that simultaneously exists “inside and outside” America, and which destines James to perpetual exclusion from the spaces that hold so much of his history (Edwards). See Rubeo, Ugo. “Taking the ‘Organic’ View: The Vertical/Horizontal Crux in Henry James’s *The American Scene*.” *RSA* 15-16 (2004): 7-30 and Edwards, Justin D. “Henry James’s ‘Alien’ New York: Gender and Race in *The American Scene*.” *American Studies International* 36.1 (1998): 66-80. [MLA International Bibliography](#). Web. 4 January 2008.

remarks that “beauty indeed was the aim of the creator of the spire of Trinity Church” (61). But the view of the building has been obscured by skyscrapers, and James wonders: “Where is the felicity of simplified Gothic, of noble preeminence, that once made of this highly-pleasing edifice the pride of the town and the feature of Broadway?” (61). Although the “charming elements are still there, just where they ever were,” he finds that “they have been mercilessly deprived of their visibility,” an observation that subordinates any personal connection to the scene and emphasizes the physicality of the structure and its visual attributes (61).

Furthermore, the comments distinguish James as a nostalgic tourist who characteristically uses anthropomorphic language to posit the rueful, modern existence of ancient architecture. In this context, Trinity Church serves primarily as an object to be looked upon and appreciated for its aesthetic value. James regrets that “our eyes” now “look down on it as a poor ineffectual thing, an architectural object addressed, even in its prime aspiration, to the patient pedestrian sense and permitting thereby a relation of intimacy” (61). Such commentary indicates James’s desire to view these scenes using his traveler’s eye. This emphasis on the seeing eye and the visual—or surface—aspects of the scene de-emphasizes James’s personal connections to these sites and provides a buffer between himself and the pain and anxiety associated with the loss of his past. Moreover, the assertion that the church “aches and throbs” because it has lost its “visibility” and the postulation that it aspires to be viewed shifts James’s own touristic desires onto the “object” of his gaze (61). Put simply, the church wants to be looked at. This reversal implies that his peering responds to the church’s ambition to be looked at and that it does not stem from a place within himself. That projection subtly associates

guilt with the act of looking. James shifts the burden of desire onto the church, thereby relinquishing his own complicity and portraying himself as a respondent to the church's need.

Whether the motive for gazing originates in James or not, he discovers at Trinity Church and in other parts of America that his sentimental aesthetic cannot be sustained. The flashy new skyline, by its very existence, mocks James's yearning to recover scenes from his past and to gaze upon these sacred landmarks as objects of classic beauty. It seemed as if "the expensive" had become a "power by itself" in this strange yet somewhat familiar metropolis (11). Skyscrapers, in particular, limit his ability to find his New York again and rediscover the picturesque nineteenth-century city of his past. The "impudently new and still more impudently 'novel'" buildings "flash" their "innumerable windows" and "flicker" their "gilt attributions" in "some general permanent 'celebration'" (60). And in Boston, he finds himself in another uncanny space, surrounded by vaguely familiar sites that now seem impenetrable. Though he only resided there for two years, James acknowledges that the experience "had left consequences out of proportion to its limited seeming self" (168). He visits the Athenæum, a structure that he sees as a "temple of culture" (173), but a "detestable 'tall building'" blocks his view (172). Like Trinity Church, the poor building "looked only rueful and snubbed" (173). James confesses that "all disposition to enter it drop[s] as dead as if from quick poison" because the structure's inherent "value" had "been brought so low that one shrank, in delicacy, from putting it to the test" (172).⁶¹ The structures that James once knew intimately and which symbolized his theory of beauty now resist his

⁶¹ James has a similar response at the State House in Newport. Although the physical scene remains unchanged—even the "clean, serious windows" have not been "debased"—James finds that he cannot enter because "cold change was installed; the place had become a public office" (162).

sentimental gaze. They reject his nostalgia and demand that he, like other sight-seers, find a new way of seeing and perceiving architecture.

Further, James believes that skyscrapers are “consecrated by no uses save the commercial at any cost” (60). They are “simply the most piercing notes in that concert of the expensively provisional into which your supreme sense of New York resolves itself” (60).⁶² Unlike Trinity Church and St. Michael’s church in Charleston, where the “high complicated, inflated spire of the church has the sincerity, approved of time, that is so rare, over the land,” the twentieth-century architecture suggests not only the nation’s rejection of its past and history, but also the very death of James’s travel aesthetic (310). At least in Europe, the “new Paris and the new Rome do at least propose . . . to be old” (85). In *Italian Hours*, he refers to “young Italy” as an “irritation” that one soon learns to “accept” because the “old” had “become more and more a museum” (158). In Italy, the old had been “preserved and perpetuated in the midst of the new” (159). Comparatively, as he observes in *A Little Tour in France*, the French town of Angers had been, “as the English say, ‘done up’” (95). It is not the “oldness, but the newness, of the place” that “strikes the sentimental tourist today, as he wanders with irritation along second-rate boulevards, looking vaguely about him for absent gables” (97). Unlike Venice and other places in Italy where the past self-consciously remains a part of the present, Angers has fallen “victim” to “modern improvements” (*Little* 97). It has lost that element that makes it seem ancient. But even more frightening, New York and Boston appear to be under the

⁶² Interestingly, there is one New York building, a very commercial building, that he admires: the Tiffany building. It was completed in 1905, and James suggests that “it presents itself to the friendly sky with a great nobleness of white marble” (138). Writing that he is “so thankful to it . . . for not having twenty-five stories, which it might easily have had, I suppose, in the wantonness of wealth or of greed” (138). Ironically, James is so pleased to find a new, non-towering structure in New York that he completely overlooks the fact that the entire purpose of this structure is to bring in revenue.

spell of a “power unguided, undirected, practically unapplied, really exerting itself in a void that could make it no response, that had nothing—poor gentle, patient, rueful, but altogether helpless, void!—to offer in return” (*American* 11). For a sentimental tourist like James, this “void” takes travel itself to a place where traditional beauty and ties to history are no longer present and where physical spaces have no relation to the traveler.

In addition to revealing James’s sentimental eye, this homecoming may be seen as a quest to reaffirm his sense of America as well as his own national identity. Thus, the reconstruction of cities like Boston and New York further alienates him and reiterates his tenuous relation to the nation. In this scenario, travel makes it possible—or impossible, as the case may be—for a returned expatriate to repatriate himself. From James’s perspective, the attempt to redefine a city by demolishing or obscuring archetypal landmarks plunges it into a space of non-identity. The dramatic alterations do much more than simply change the landscape. They indicate a peculiar desire to repudiate the past and literally re-build a new ethos. Such change hinders the returnee’s attempt to reconnect with the home land. For a nostalgic, returning traveler like James, the new versions of these cities have no relation to history, to one’s perceptions of these urban spaces, or to the returnee’s sense of self. Passage through Europe sustains James’s notions about place. When writing about Venice in *Italian Hours*, he confesses that there is “nothing new to be said about her certainly, but the old is better than any novelty” (7). He believes that it “would be a sad day indeed when there should be something new to say,” and he writes “with the full consciousness of having no information whatever to offer” (7). For James, one who values stability and stasis, traveling to and writing about these ancient places serves as a means for giving “a fillip” to “memory,” and he expects

to find these places “always in order” (7). Thus, even though he is an outsider, his relationship to Venice is constant and secure.

However, America is a place of cultural and architectural destruction, and the shock of touring such physical devastation evokes an emotional crisis that makes him feel alienated and lost in a place of assumed familiarity. For James, these once-familiar cities seem only a shell of what they once were, and he believes that the nation itself has perilously put its character, its history, and the integrity of its own narrative at risk. As R. D. Gooder explains in his consideration of *The American Scene*, James feels that a “nation that belittles its own past by destroying the artefacts, in this case the architecture, that gave it meaning, is in danger of losing itself, of losing touch with that which is beyond itself, of losing its soul” (24-25). Thus, for James, American cities “bristle,” and they are not “settled and confirmed and content” (*American* 205). And, “New York, in that sense, had appeared to [James] then not a society at all, and it was rudimentary that Chicago would be one still less” (205). Boston, too, he claims, is “thinkable as subject to mutation,” since he had “just seemed . . . to catch her in the almost uncanny inconsequence of change” (205). Such reckless demolition thwarts James’s ability to re-establish his bond with the nation. He simply cannot use this journey as a means of repatriation. Having left America in 1881 for a life in Europe, James seems to have hoped that this return would provide an opportunity to reaffirm his American identity. He asserts that “one’s supreme relation . . . was one’s relation to one’s country,” yet that connection is continually challenged (67).⁶³ He calls himself a “native,” yet his American “I” is bruised nearly every time he sets out (3).

⁶³ Of course, James’s estrangement is not altogether new. In 1881, he returned to America after a six-year absence and, in a Notebook entry dated November 25, writes about the decision to leave his native land: “I

When Cather traveled to England, she, too, discovered scenes that undermined her assumptions and damaged her relationship to the country. Although the connection was already tenuous, having been primarily built on information from books rather than actual experience, the journey exacerbated that and caused her to repudiate conventional ways of identifying the Mother Land. In Cather's experience, travel failed to reaffirm what she thought she knew, and her narrative undercuts traditional depictions of England. Her extended discussion of the boats that traverse London's canal, for example, emphasizes the freight that these vessels carry: "grain, pig iron, wrought iron and heavy or bulky freight" (902). Her remarks hardly iterate assumptions about London as a cultural center. And her report on the size of boats themselves ("the largest are about seventy-five feet long and fifteen feet wide and carry a cargo of about fifty tons") belies the picturesque qualities typically associated with England's canals (902).⁶⁴ For James, too, travel in America, a place that he thought he knew intimately, becomes uncanny and challenges his understanding of his homeland. Rather than affirming his sense of the nation and providing a more secure sense of his American and personal "I," journeys into New York, Boston, and other sites around the country shatter memories and long-held perceptions and thrust him into an anxious space where even his way of perceiving place no longer seems viable. For James, then, both physical movement and the movement of

am 37 years old, I have made my choice. . . . My choice is the old world—my choice, my need, my life" (NB 367). More than twenty years before his return, James is already writing with certainty about his decision to leave America. The entry in the 1881 Notebook continues, "My impressions here are exactly what I expected they would be, and I scarcely see the place, and feel the manners, the race, the tone of things, now that I am on the spot, more vividly than I did while I was still in Europe. My work lies there—and with this vast new world, *je n'ai que faire*. One can't do both—one must choose" (NB 367).

⁶⁴ When Henry James discusses the canal in Chester, such workaday details are elided and he references the "narrow canal, with locks and barges and burly watermen in smocks and breeches" only as a means of providing additional atmosphere to the picturesque nature of the scene (*English* 38). Even Dreiser, known for his emphasis on the more common aspects of life, eschews the rougher qualities of a French canal and instead uses his descriptions to create a more traditionally picturesque portrait of France. See *A Traveler at Forty* (209, 401, 493).

the touristic eye can deny the experience that he craves, and the failure of his eye, especially, causes a tremendous amount of anxiety.

The Anxiety and Appeal of Touring Modernity

James's observations of these personal landmarks reveal much about how he perceives the nation, and his comments indicate how he operates as a tourist in America. His accounts of European travel primarily focus on conventional sites—cathedrals, castles, and museums. But America lacked such scenes, and James, like other nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American tourists, was forced to discover alternative topics. Some travelers documented adventures of cross-country travel—whether by car, railroad, or horseback—while others narrated stories about the nation's natural wonders or focused on regions known for picturesque beauty, such as New England or the Southwest. However, with the growth of big cities and the rise of urban tourism, visitors to America discovered modern destinations that offered fresh material. Roads, bridges, buildings, and “gaslight” tours of cities became matters for discussion, and European and American tourists alike “moved through selected streets and sites” of cities such as New York, Washington D.C., and San Francisco “in pursuit of innocent pleasure” (Cocks 6). In “Vacation on Fifth Avenue,” for example, the anonymous guide claims that “Fifth Avenue is the most interesting street in the world,” and the writer provides a ten-day itinerary for the modern tourist that includes the home of Andrew Carnegie, Central Park, the Waldorf-Astoria, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

While the author of the article above compares Fifth Avenue to a “splendid river,” for others, busy, skyscraper-lined streets can be overwhelming, and their narratives do

not always reflect such simplistic acceptance of urban spaces. For many travelers, the metropolitan scene evokes a type of cognitive dissonance where the individual is simultaneously attracted to and repulsed by a particular space. H. G. Wells, in *The Future in America*, exhibits such conflicting feelings toward New York. On one hand, he interprets the “achievement” of New York as a “threatening promise,” and he maintains that the city’s “growth” occurs “under a pressure that increases, and amidst a hungry uproar of effort” (28).⁶⁵ On the other hand, Wells imagines a day, made possible by that very same progress, when “bright electrical subways” will replace “the filth-diffusing railways of to-day” and when “grimy stone and peeling paint” will be covered with “white marble and spotless surfaces and a shining order” (33). It is a world where “everything” is “wider, taller, cleaner, better” (33). *The American Scene* similarly reveals the extent to which New York excites, stimulates, and terrifies James, a traveler who wants to tour and gaze upon America with a “freshness of eye” (3).⁶⁶

But before examining how America compels James to break away from his usual method of touring and write about his journey in a new way, it is useful to consider

⁶⁵ Emily Post harbors similar trepidations about the future of New York. In *By Motor to the Golden Gate*, she frets because “New York was built, is building, will ever be building in huge blocks of steel and stone,” and she fears that “the ambitious of every city and country in the world will keep pouring into it and crowding its floor space and shoving it up higher and higher into towering cubes” (240).

⁶⁶ *The American Scene* is not the first text that demonstrates cognitive dissonance in James’s travels. He expresses similar feelings of attraction and repulsion toward London in *English Hours*. Recounting his first “impression” of the city, James recalls seeing it as a “murky modern Babylon” (1). He creates a dark scene and writes that he “wondered what had become, on this side of the world, of the big white splotch in the heavens” (2). Still, for James, the “gray mildness, shading away into black at every pretext, appeared in itself a promise” (2). In the same way, he insists that Trafalgar Square “was not lovely—it was in fact rather horrible; but as I move again through dusky, tortuous miles . . . I recognize the first step in an initiation of which the subsequent stages were to abound in pleasant things” (2). A couple of days after his initial arrival, as he stands in his temporary abode, a “sadly damaged” place within earshot of Piccadilly, the “horror of the whole place came over me, like a tiger-pounce of homesickness which had been watching its moment” (4). He believes that “London was hideous, vicious, cruel, and above all overwhelming; whether or no she was ‘careful of the type’, she was as indifferent as Nature herself to the single life” (4-5). However, James is also “happy to say” that while that “momentary vision of [London’s] smeared face and stony heart has remained memorable,” he “can easily summon up” more pleasant images, and he afterwards identifies himself as a “real London-lover” (5).

James's traditional approach to travel. In the Preface of *Italian Hours*, he indicates that his commentary "on various visits to Italy" primarily describes "quite other days than these," a remark that indicates his desire, "above all," to explore the "aspects and appearances . . . of things as it mainly *used* to be" (3). In *English Hours*, James confesses an admiration for Chester because it is an "antique town," the antithesis of "our modern notions of convenience" (38). Apparently, "mediaeval England sits bravely under" the "gables" of Chester (38). For James, travel facilitates a voyage into the past and provides an opportunity to pursue objects of transcendent beauty that generate an emotional response. His travel aesthetic thus parallels William Gilpin's theory of "picturesque travel," where the traveler engages in the "pursuit" of a "great object," such as the "elegant relics of ancient architecture, the ruined tower, the gothic arch, the remains of castles, and abbeys" (140). According to Gilpin, and James would agree, these "are the richest legacies of art. They are consecrated by time, and almost deserve the veneration we pay to the works of nature itself" (140). Nature also possesses such beauty, and Gilpin asserts that we "examine it by the rules of painting" (140). Gilpin calls this "picturesque beauty" and claims that it causes a "pause of intellect," where we "rather *feel*, than *survey*" the prized object or scene (140).

James attempts to tour America using that same dated European model and, in certain places, it works. Situating himself in what he repeatedly calls "illusions" or "the idyll," James momentarily surrounds himself in scenes that remind him more of Europe and the past than modern day America. While visiting his brother in New Hampshire, James rests easily "in the deep valleys and the wide woodlands, on the forest-fringed slopes, the far-seeing crests of the high places, and by the side of the liberal streams and

the lonely lakes” (14). Such sights bring back “the sweetness of belated recognition, that of the sense of some bedimmed summer of the distant prime flushing back into life and asking to give again as much as possible of what it had given before” (14). For James, the mountainous view, although not absent of “newness,” is a familiar, welcoming space that grants him the pleasure of revisiting his past. With its “outlooks to purple crag and blue horizon” and with his own emphasis on nature’s splendor, James describes a sight that is quintessentially American. One can almost see the purple mountain majesties. Yet, he describes the picture using a European model. It is “so *delicately* Arcadian,” he opines (14). It is “exquisitely and ideally Sicilian” and “Theocritan” (14). These descriptions could serve as a psychological defense that James uses to reacquaint himself with the nation. By imposing this European meaning onto these scenes, James can imagine an America of permanence and beauty. For a moment, he can escape those urban scenes that demand “a consideration of the millions spent” and lapse into a more familiar and comfortable way of touring (14). Perhaps he can even find a space for himself there. However, the Europeanization of these spaces also denies their American-ness and reduces the nation to its harsher urban spaces; therefore, viewing it through European eyes actually reaffirms James’s separation and perpetuates his outsider status.

In addition, James is completely aware that he interprets this American scene in European terms. He wonders: “Why was the whole connotation so *delicately* Arcadian,” and “why did most of the larger views themselves . . . insist on referring themselves to the idyllic *type* in its purity?” (14). One could argue that James criticizes the scene because it only achieves a simulacrum of the idyll. It is only a “type,” not the real thing, which is in Europe. Furthermore, the remarks suggest an awareness that such scenes do

not represent the “real” American ethos. James confesses that New Hampshire had “succeeded for a month in being strangely sweet, and in producing, quite with intensity, the fine illusion” (14). And he likewise acknowledges that the “apparent superior charm of the whole thing” may have been little more than “an accident of one’s own situation, the state of having happened to be deprived to excess—that is for too long—of naturalism in *quantity*” (15). He knows, then, that this is an “accident,” an “illusion.”

The real in America, according to James, is in fact the exact opposite of what he sees in New Hampshire. The natural scenes that he enjoys in New England do not exemplify modern-day America, at least not for James. Instead, the provisional brings meaning to the country, and he winces at the nation’s intent to follow “that perpetual passionate pecuniary purpose which plays with all forms, which derides and devours them, though it may pile up the cost of them in order to rest a while, spent and haggard, in the illusion of their finality” (85). The real America, then, is merchant civilization and business ventures. The illusion is picturesque scenery and a few glimpses of the past. While touring Harvard, James expresses a desire to remain in “the idyll” for as long as he can, and he confesses an “instinct not to press, not to push on, till forced, through any half-open door of the real” (47). Despite knowing that the “real was there, certainly enough, outside and all round,” at Harvard and in the mountains of New Hampshire, he had found a space, a “standing-ground,” as he calls it, where “one would walk in the idyll, if only from hour to hour, while one could” (47).

Although Harvard and New Hampshire provide momentary escapes, James has come to America to see the real. Thus, the urban scenes of the nation’s modern cities are compelling. Perhaps cognitive dissonance compels James to turn his eyes upward,

repeatedly, toward the skyscrapers. For James, the “multitudinous sky-scrapers, standing up to the view . . . like extravagant pins in a cushion already overplanted” obscure the New York that he once knew and disrupt his efforts to resituate himself in his native land (60). But, he also confesses that maybe “those monsters of the mere market . . . had more to say, on the question of ‘effect,’ than I had at first allowed?—since they are the element that looms largest for me through a particular impression” (63). James’s uneasy attraction to New York’s urban spaces reveals his desire to explore modernity and comprehend its meaning, and his remarks demonstrate both an anxiety-induced fear and a liberating attraction.

First, the fear. While taking a ferry through the New York Bay, he turns his attention to factories, an aspect of the Bay that ultimately reinforces a sense of alienation and separation from his native New York. To James, the factory is a “monstrous organism” with “an enormous system of steam-shuttles or electric bobbins” which “give the pitch of the vision of energy” (59). The “monster,” as he calls it, “grows and grows, flinging abroad its loose limbs even as some unmannered giant at his ‘larks,’” and the “binding stitches must for ever fly further and faster and draw harder” (59). He imagines that “the future complexity of the web” would morph into “some colossal set of clockworks, some steel-souled machine room of brandished arms and hammering fists and opening and closing jaws” (59). Such a world seems more than a little alarming and characteristically non-European. The more America moves away from James’s comfortable European model, the greater his anxiety. Furthermore, based on James’s portrayal, twentieth-century America seems like a world without people or a human soul. It is dominated by monstrous machinery. Even bridges are threatening because they “are

but as the horizontal sheaths of pistons working together at high pressure, day and night, and subject, one apprehends with perhaps inconsistent gloom, to certain, to fantastic, to merciless multiplication” (59).

But James’s factory-as-monster portrait was a common theme in early twentieth-century travel writing. It was a time, as Conn explains, “in which Americans realized, whether with outrage or hope, that they were to live henceforth in an irretrievably man-made, machine-made world” (6). Moreover, it was typical for travel writers to create a subtle juxtaposition between what was American and what was European. When Julian Street described his tour of an automobile factory’s machine shop in *Abroad at Home*, he too created a horrifying scene of modern American turmoil and madness that was neither European nor American, but rather something entirely wild and untamable. And his depiction is even more terrifying than James’s. Street acknowledges that “there was order in that place, of course there was a system,” but he is “unaccustomed to such things” (93). The “whirling shafts and wheels,” the “writhing machinery,” with its constant “shrieking, hammering, and clatter,” and the “savage-looking foreign population” of workers “expressed but one thing”—and that was “delirium” (93). While James’s description of the Bay blends science and the imaginary, Street relies upon the images and sounds of a tormented natural world to convey his impression of the machine shop. What’s more, words like “savage” and “writhing” and “shrieking” evoke the most terrifying stereotypes of the *other*. Even though the factory is a quintessentially American space, Street refuses to portray it as such. By describing the scene in such charged terms, he signifies the modern factory as something alien and implies that its presence somehow

de-Americanizes the nation and makes it frightening and less recognizable. But Street does not stop there. He takes the metaphor even further and invites the reader to:

Fancy a jungle of wheels and belts and weird iron forms—of men, machinery, and movement—add to it every kind of sound you can imagine: the sound of a million squirrels chirking, a million monkeys quarreling, a million lions roaring, a million pigs dying, a million elephants smashing through a forest of sheet iron, a million boys whistling on their fingers, a million others coughing with whooping cough, a million sinners groaning as they are dragged to hell—imagine all of this happening at the very edge of Niagara Falls, with the everlasting roar of the cataract as a perpetual background, and you may acquire a vague conception of that place. (Street 93-94)

The machine shop generates a debilitating anxiety that nearly paralyzes Street. He admits that the tour puts him in a “mental fog,” and he suffers from the “feeling that I was not in any factory, but in a Gargantuan lunatic asylum where fifteen thousand raving, tearing maniacs had been given full authority to go ahead and do their damndest” (94). Upon exiting, Street breathes a sigh of relief and confesses, “I was glad to leave the machine shop” (94-95). At least part of this anxiety stems from the use of images that point to *other* cultures that seem barbaric. By creating a link between jungles and wild animals and modernity, Street makes these American spaces seem like a terrifying, discombobulating environment that gives rise to madness and mayhem. Such descriptions reassert and even amplify fears over American’s emergence as a nation of factories and

reveal how tourism can trans-mutate into a terrifying experience, depending on the lens that one uses to view the scene.

That Street even has the opportunity to tour an automobile factory demonstrates the extent to which modernity had transformed tourism itself and, while Street's perception of the machine shop thoroughly captures the anxiety of the modern age, it also indicates the creative opportunities such realities provide. In *The American Scene*, James's ferry ride through the Bay serves a similar creative purpose. Though his portrayal of the factories provides an outlet for his anxiety and another opportunity to express his distaste for modern American architecture and commercialism, these same scenes also excite, stimulate, and even liberate a new type of creativity in James. He writes that "New York, among cities, most deeply languishes and palpitates, or vibrates and flourishes (whichever way one may put it) under the breath of her conditions" (89). James perceives New York as a stimulating, energetic city, and it exhilarates him even while it induces distress. He very much wants to take in the spectacle, and these moments belie Peter Collister's assertions that *The American Scene* presents James as reduced to a state of passive or "abject" submission (11).⁶⁷ James does portray the factory as a monster, but even that can arguably be interpreted as an expression of his desire to exploit and satirize—rather than convey—anxieties over modern technology.

At any rate, the Bay, which can hardly be separated from the steel structures built there, is beautiful and poetic, and playful and exciting. It rejoices "as with the voice of the morning" (58). At times, and "in certain lights," it is "almost charming" (58). As he

⁶⁷ Peter Collister suggests that, in America, James "is subjected to landscapes and urban scenes which reduce him to abject passivity by means of their intimidating and progressive modernity" (11). See *Writing the Self: Henry James and America*. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007.

sheds his anxiety, James has a “sense of the scene” that is “commanding and thrilling” (58). Moreover, for the first time, he perceives a harmonious blending of technology with nature. It no longer overwhelms; instead, there is an “ease” in the way the two come together. According to James:

The extent, the ease, the energy, the quantity and number, all notes scattered about as if, in the whole business and in the splendid light, nature and science were joyously romping together, might have been taking on again, for their symbol, some collective presence of great circling and plunging, hovering and perching sea-birds, white-winged images of the spirit, of the restless freedom of the Bay. (57)

For the first time since his “easy wave” crashed, James expresses a sensation of pure enjoyment. He seems to forget or lose himself in the scene, though that does not indicate apprehension or suggest that James has become separated from his “I.”

In his survey of American travelers in Europe, William Merrill Decker notices that James “remains in a predominantly spectatorial relationship with the places visited” (128). According to Decker, “if the object” that James views “is not a sketch, a watercolor, or a painting, it is a dramatic scene observed from the shelter of a box seat” and there “is never any question that the literary traveler imposes his fancy” (128). It is “almost as though he were imagining the whole thing” (128). Decker’s observations ring true in most instances, But, in the Bay, references to James’s eye, impressions, and pictures have disappeared. This experience is real. Anxiety has seemingly vanished, and James is no longer a self-conscious tourist. No longer searching for ghosts or straining his ear to catch whispers of the past, James relinquishes his nineteenth-century European

perspective and centers himself in the modern moment. He embraces an entirely new way of looking at the American scene. The experience in the Bay indicates how James “masters” his “impressions of New York,” to borrow David Gervais’s language (352). Indeed, the journey itself “liberated an extraordinary vein of fantasy” in James’s discourse, and it revealed “a language that could be playful and bantering without sacrifice of either beauty or moral weight” (Gervais 352).⁶⁸ That lightheartedness also characterizes James’s attempt to persuade Concord, Massachusetts that “size” really doesn’t matter (190). And his confession that he can “still like the places we have known or loved” after they have become “old,” but that he can “scarcely bear it in the people,” injects humor into a narrative that seems at times overburdened by confessions of anxiety and distress (181).

But to return to James’s experience on the ferry boat. That crossing alters his perception of New York and his relation to tourism itself, even if only for a short while. He takes pleasure in the “happily-excited and amused view of the great face of New York” (57), and he calls his voyage around the Bay a “remarkable adventure” (58). Even in “the bigness and bravery and insolence, especially, of everything that rushed and shrieked,” a comment that evokes Julian Street’s anxiety in the machine shop, James perceives something much more calming. The Bay exemplifies a “boundless cool assurance” and a “genius so grandly at play” (58). Such descriptions imply that James has experienced an awakening, that he sees something that he “had never before” recognized (58). His treatment of America’s changing social and physical landscape requires that he

⁶⁸ R. D. Gooder likewise notes that mere “travel sketches” could not adequately allow James the freedom to portray America. According to Gooder, “James gave rein to a prose style which is unique, even in his work. Its extravagance is born of his attempt to discover the richest possible meaning in what he saw and what he did, without recourse to the abstractions of sociology or economics” (19). See “The American Scene, or Paradise Lost.” *The Cambridge Quarterly* 37 (2008): 16-29.

move beyond his usual narrative methodologies and discover new avenues of expression. This involves abandoning his pursuit of picturesque (European) landscapes and architecture that “speaks” in conventional ways. He is compelled to transform his own mode of touring to a far more stark (and sometimes playful) presentation of modernity, technological advance, and the very visible machinations of American society.

As this analysis demonstrates, that does not always imply anxiety. Although James struggles to discover his place in this uncanny America, he nonetheless perseveres in his efforts to see and comprehend the nation. While “the powers of removal” seem to James “as looming, awfully, in the newest mass of multiplied floors and windows visible,” he steels himself against their threat and bravely walks into them (73). It is only those sites associated with his personal past that he cannot enter, such as Boston’s Athenæum and the State House at Newport. He claims that “old societies are interesting,” but he is “far from thinking that young ones may not be more so—with their collective countenance so much more presented, precisely, to observation, as by their artless need to get themselves explained” (87). With this new outlook, James marches forward and tours what are for him some of the most anxiety-inducing spaces in America.

The Tourist’s Gaze

Since James’s 1882 departure, millions of immigrants had entered the country, and for James their presence reiterated the unsettling transformation of his natal land. It also deepened his sense of alienation and intensified his “sense of dispossession” (67). Throughout *The American Scene*, James expresses anxiety at their ubiquity and, at first glance, his remarks concerning the “gross aliens” appear to be little more than the

apprehensions of a xenophobe (172). Certainly, comments about the “babel of tongues,” jabs about an “overdeveloped proboscis,” and assertions that the Jewish population in New York “swarmed” (90) do much to affirm F. O. Matthiessen’s observation that James is “dangerously close” to propagating a “doctrine of racism” (110). And even though James complains that Central Park, the lower East side, and the “upper reaches of Fifth and of Madison Avenues” look as if the “fruit of the foreign tree” had been “shaken down there with a force that smothered everything,” their pervasiveness is not the source of James’s anxiety (90). Rather, he identifies the immigrant presence as a symptom of change that alters his sacred spaces. Like the tall buildings that tower over everything, the ‘aliens’ represent yet another obstacle; he believes that they prevent him from re-entering scenes of his past.

James’s remarks demonstrate his anxiety over immigration, and much scholarship focuses on these specific issues. Justin Edwards has examined James’s reaction to New York’s new arrivals, and he suggests that “James’s exotic depiction of immigrant life functions to create a distinction between himself and the Other.” According to Edwards, “by defining the immigrant areas of the city as exotic, James sustains the boundaries between himself and the ‘alien’” (Edwards).⁶⁹ Peter Conn also has analyzed James’s response to the European *other* in America, and he argues that the “amused complacency with which James denies the simple humanity of the people he inspects serves in a sense as his revenge against them for dispossessing him from his country” (42). Rather than submitting another yet consideration of how the alien presence serves as a source of anxiety for James, I want to evaluate the touristic relation between the traveler and the

⁶⁹ Justin Edwards’s essay, “Henry James’s ‘Alien’ New York: Gender and Race in *The American Scene*,” is an online essay and does not have page numbers.

immigrants. Using his gaze, James transforms the immigrants into objects of tourism, and this section will examine what happens when he attempts to impose his travel aesthetic on them.

For James, the immigrants and the districts that they live in represent an intriguing visual element of the American scene. In a travel narrative that typically ignores the human presence and emphasizes landscape and destination, James actually devotes a significant number of pages to these groups, and though he seems extremely conscious of his habit of gazing on them, that does not cause him to shift his gaze. Instead, he looks even harder and transforms their bodies and lives into a site of objectification and visual pleasure. At Beacon Hill, he observes the “continuous passage of men and women, in couples and talkative companies” who were passing by “in their Sunday best and decently enjoying their leisure” (171). For James, they hold “more interest” than the view itself, and there is something gratifying about watching this parade of Sunday afternoon strollers (171). Yet, he is struck by the discovery that “no sound of English, in a single instance, escaped their lips” (171), and James alleges that they “expressed, as everywhere and always, the great cost at which every place on my list had become braver and louder” (172). He is persuaded that “they give the measure of the distance by which the general movement was *away*—away, always and everywhere, from the old presumptions and conceivabilities” (172). James pointedly accuses these new Bostonians of taking away what he sees as his rightful space, and his commentary indicates his alienation and his frustration over that. At the same time, this scene demonstrates James’s subject position as a silent observer. He merely watches from the margins as the sounds and sights of the

immigrants bring meaning to the scene. At this point, James has not yet figured out how to conceive of these individuals as anything other than invaders into his sacred space.

In *Our Philadelphia*, Elizabeth Pennell also reports that arrival of Eastern Europeans has dramatically altered her hometown, and she calls the increase in their numbers “the worst shock of all” (460). She acknowledges that “we had our aliens a quarter of a century ago. But they were mostly Irish, Germans, Swedes,” and the “Italian at his fruit-stall was as yet rather picturesque” (471). After her two-decade absence, Pennell is startled by the new faces, especially the “Russian Jews,” but also “Latins, Slavs, and Orientals who do not fit so unobtrusively into our American scheme of things” (468). Such groups, as Pennell delicately implies, are guilty of not looking like previous immigrants who shared her Anglo-Saxon heritage and appearance, and she alleges that they are “pushing Philadelphians out of the town” (468). Why can’t they be more like the “other aliens,” who were “more modest and set up their slums where they interfere less with Philadelphia tradition” (467)? She admits: “To be honest, I did not like it. I did not like to find Philadelphia a foreign town” (472). While Pennell’s anxiety is undeniably tied to what she sees as the foreignization of her home, like James, she is also held captive by a passive gaze. Limited to simply staring at the scene, Pennell does not have the strength to enter their spaces. Feeling as if she has no control over the situation at all, she is overcome by a sense of alienation and by her own subject position as a tourist, which, in these moments, supersedes her identity as a Philadelphian.

Although Pennell openly struggles to come to terms with the immigrant presence, James discovers a way to alleviate his anxiety. Unlike Pennell, he does not remain the victim of an inactive gaze. When he visits the Jersey Shore, he begins to separate his

emotions from the scene, and there is a distinct change in how he views these *other* Americans. A group of Italian workers grow silent when he approaches, and the absence of communication baffles him. Had such an encounter occurred in Europe, there would have been “the play of mutual recognition, founded on old familiarities and heredities, and involving, for the moment, some impalpable exchange” (91). However, in America, such an “exchange struck me as absent from the air to positive intensity, to mere unthinkability. It was if contact were out of the question and the sterility of passage between us recorded, with due dryness, in our staring silence” (91). Convinced that the failure to communicate is because the Italians have changed, James wonders “what has become of that element of the agreeable address in *them* which has, from far back, so enhanced for the stranger the interest and pleasure of a visit to their beautiful country” (98). In his opinion, the Italian “became then, to my vision (which I have called fascinated for want of a better description of it), a creature promptly despoiled of those ‘manners’ which were the grace (as I am again reduced to calling it) by which one had best known and, on opportunity, best liked him” (97). James laments the loss of these characteristics, and he blames the process of assimilation for their demise. Yet, while he claims to stand in utter silence, his perception of the immigrant changes dramatically. His remarks no longer suggest that these individuals pose a threat to a returning native son. Now, the Italian newcomer is a “creature” because, evidently, he has lost an idealized character trait that James both values and uses as evidence of European superiority. Unlike the scene in Boston where James stands quietly on the sidelines, he imposes an entirely new identity on the Italians and, though that in and of itself is problematic, the

act indicates his attempt to fight back and assert control over the immigrants by labeling them and identifying them in a very specific—and objectified—way.⁷⁰

When he turns his gaze toward New York’s Jewish population, James casts aside fear and anxiety and appropriates racially-charged language in an effort to seize control and convert a threatening presence into a curiosity of travel. While their numbers startle him, James boldly pursues them, going straight into their neighborhoods where he can observe how they have transitioned to American life. He passes through an area that “bristled, at every step, with the signs and sounds, immitigable, unmistakable, of a Jewry, that had burst at all bounds” (100), but he shows no signs of turning away from this adventure. First, James compares them to “small strange animals,” like “snakes or worms . . . who, when cut into pieces, wriggle away contentedly and live in the snippet as completely as in the whole” (100). Their homes, too, with their exterior fire-escapes, resemble a “spaciously organized cage for the nimbler class of animals in some great zoological garden” (102). According to James, this “general analogy is irresistible—it

⁷⁰ This scene also elucidates James’s struggle to re-insert himself into his native space, and he may see a parallel between the Italian workers and himself. Just as they have seemingly lost some defining aspect of their identity, James also has lost something during this return, and he has what Ross Posnock calls an “uneasy but unflinching sense of affinity with the alien” (227). That makes James’s encounter with the Italian immigrants all the more uncanny, and the experience starts to resemble a type of Freudian doubling where James-the-native looks very much like these nameless immigrants. His remarks on the notion of feeling “at home” in America are particularly telling:

The great fact about his companions was that, foreign as they might be, newly inducted as they might be, they were *at home*, really more at home, at the end of their few weeks or month or their year or two, than they had ever in their lives been before; and that *he* was at home, too, quite with the same intensity; and yet that it was this very equality of condition that, from side to side, made the whole medium so strange. (96)

Such commentary indicates an assumed relation between the “at home” aliens and the “at home” native. Their identities are hybridized, where one’s identity is steeped in two separate worlds, and they even share the same native homes: Europe and America. For James, this awareness that the immigrant is his double provides an odd comfort. He refers to them as “companions”—the word alien has vanished from his discourse—and the dehumanizing language used to describe the Jewish immigrants is entirely absent. James does confess that this shared experience makes the scene seem uncanny, or “strange,” yet this “discovery that alien and native are not opposed but entwined,” to quote Posnock, fails to elicit the anxious commentary seen in other parts of *The American Scene* (235). See Posnock, Ross. “Affirming the Alien: The Pragmatist Pluralism of *The American Scene*.” *The Cambridge Companion to Henry James*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. 224-46.

seems to offer, in each district, a little world of bars and perches and swings for human squirrels and monkeys” (102). While he argues that the “very name of architecture perishes” when applied to these edifices, James finds relief in knowing, at least he thinks he knows, that “the inhabitants lead, like the squirrels and monkeys, all the merrier life” (102).

Although such dehumanizing commentary reflects the national anxiety over the Jewish population and echoes the racist discourse that was all too common at this time, the scene also indicates James’s determination to impose an aesthetic of travel onto the Jewish *other*. By using language that equates them to harmless animals safely and happily secured behind the bars of a zoo, James forces them into what is necessarily a space of tourism. As little more than exhibits in this “zoological garden” of his own creation, James and his reader can freely enter and examine their habitat. Granted, James is horribly guilty of reasserting anti-Semitic sentiments and of perpetuating negative impressions of the Jewish population. This type of tourism depends upon degradation and dehumanization. But, his remarks, however wrong, still demonstrate an evolution in his approach to tourism and a refocusing of his gaze. He effectively transforms the immigrant into a tourist site, a landmark for the new New York.

James’s descriptions and his caging in of the Jewish populace also serves as a form of Foucauldian control, where the immigrants have been imprisoned and are always under James’s watchful eye. They always act and move, yet such movement only occurs within the confines of their “swarming little square” (102). And while their homes—or cages—are not arranged in a panopticon, their lives are always subject to the all-knowing, all-seeing giver of meaning, James. Once they have been labeled and contained, James

can further enjoy them as an object of the gaze, and he peers into their lives with the same liberty that he views a landscape. For James, who is a most conscientious observer, this act of watching provides pleasure and power, and it prevents the immigrant populace from overstepping bounds. According to James, one can:

go about with him meanwhile, sharing, all respectfully, in his deliberation, waiting on his convenience, watching him at his interesting work. The vast quarters of the city present him as thus engaged in it, and they are curious and portentous and ‘picturesque’ just by reason of their doing so. You recognize in them, freely, those elements that are not elements of swift convertibility, and you lose yourself in the wonder of what becomes, as it were, of the obstinate, the unconverted residuum. (95)

Because the threat has been adequately contained, it is safe—and pleasurable—to observe these individuals as they go about their business. Now, rather than expressions of fear and anxiety and rather than presenting disparaging images of the racial other, the onlooker can appreciate the difference because it has been confined. Moreover, that there is such an emphasis on both the visuality of the immigrants and the role of the gazer suggests a clear determination to aestheticize this group. By forcing them into this objectified space, James constructs an alternative reality where *others* appear by their very nature to invite a dominant gaze and conform to his aesthetic of travel.

The act of travel, or transportation, itself—moving from Point A to Point B—also presents an opportunity for this peculiar type of tourism that de-emphasizes traditional landscapes and highlights human bodies and human diversity. Trains provide an

unusually close point of contact with social others and are thus the perfect setting for one to cast an aestheticizing gaze on one's fellow travelers. Cather writes about such an experience in "The Old City of the Popes," an article from her 1902 journey through England and France. On the train from Lyon to Avignon, she reports that there were "eight women and one wretched infant" in the "compartment" that she and McClung were in (934). Without hesitation, Cather describes these individuals in terms that either signify them as objects of art and mythology or utterly dehumanize them and make them seem animalistic and barbaric. First, she focuses on the "women of the soil," those individuals one might see in "pictures by Millet or Bastien-Lepage" (934). According to Cather, while these women "are very well in pictures," they are "not the most desirable traveling companions in a little compartment on a burning August day" (934). Next, she turns her gaze to a baby, who "had not much more clothing on than an infant Bacchus" (934). Finally, she describes a "German girl" in the compartment. By Cather's report, the nameless girl "was so warm and stupid that she had much ado to speak German. She looked very much like a fat, pink pig that has been playing in the mud" (935). Continuing in this vein, Cather suggests that the girl "had not bathed these many years," and she asserts that "all the smelling salts we had brought with us could not hide that fact" (935). At one o'clock, the girl had her lunch, a "fat bologna sausage, a lump of black bread and a bit of cheese that may have been fresh when she left her dear Deutschland a week before" (935).

On one level, such commentary, with its allusions to art and mythology and even the snobbish portrayal of the German girl, demonstrates Cather's intent to distance herself from this group. Her remarks also evoke the standard of "neatness" that she used

to describe and disparage the lower classes in England. Though they share a third-class compartment, Cather attempts to prove that she is in no way a third-class individual. She only traveled in this manner because she and McClung “felt it our duty to be economical” (934). That said, the descriptions expose how Cather gazes at their bodies, memorizes them, and uses that material to generate atmosphere in her travel narrative. In this sense, the French women, the baby, and the German girl serve a purely aesthetic purpose—to provide a silent though strikingly graphic backdrop to what was likely an otherwise uneventful train ride. Cather claims that the scene inside the train is of little consequence when one glances out and sees the “Rhone just outside your car window, the Cevennes on one side of you and the Alps on the other” (935). However, her pedestrian observations of the red soil and the cypress and olive trees do little to compete with the human scene that she has constructed. For Cather, that clearly provides greater opportunities for gazing at and controlling unfamiliar spaces.

Mary Louise Pratt, in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, coined the term “contact zone,” which she defined as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other” (4). According to Pratt, the relationships that develop in these spaces are often “highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” (4). Although Pratt’s analysis focuses on issues concerning the relation between the colonizer and the colonized, the concept of the contact zone nonetheless illuminates the asymmetrical relationship between the traveler and the human object of that individual’s gaze. Cather demonstrates how the train itself, in addition to serving as a mode of transportation, becomes a vehicle of contact where disparate groups are placed in close proximity. That closeness creates a space where the so-called cultured travel

writer may use their skill to construct a hierarchical bond between one's self and one's fellow travelers. Cather's descriptions on the train and in other uncomfortable places indicate how she becomes the giver of meaning and how she uses her gaze to force her co-travelers into a subordinate place. While Cather interprets her traveling companions, they simply sit silently and wait to be transported to their destination.

James also spends much time as a train passenger, and he, too, uses that as an opportunity to gaze upon and make judgments about his fellow travelers. His portrayal of one group in particular, the "ubiquitous commercial travelers," demonstrates the imbalanced nature of their relationship (*American* 313). Like Cather, James has a habit of injecting his own anxieties and prejudices into the narrative. Using powerful descriptions and situating these men, who have lives and families and who by necessity are complex beings, as objects of a very disparaging tourist's gaze, James transforms this group of individuals into little more than spectacles of travel. By confessing that he "was to treasure them as specimens of something I had surely never yet so *undisputedly* encountered," James immediately dehumanizes these men and identifies them as something *other* than himself and the members of his social set (313). He also evokes something akin to scientific language when he examines their physical being. His eye moves freely over their bodies, and he notes their "facial character, vocal tone, primal rawness of speech, general accent and attitude" (313). According to James, they are "extraordinarily base and vulgar" (313), and he concludes that "what was the matter" with these men is that they are "unformed, undeveloped, unrelated above all—unrelated to any merciful modifying terms of the great social proposition" (315). He sees them as little more than "creatures touchingly, tragically doomed" (314).

At first glance, it seems that their social status, or lack thereof, causes James's anxiety. Personifying the new, modern America, these men are charged with pursuing wealth and devoting their time to work. As an individual dedicated to leisure, James naturally finds such an existence unbearable. But even more than that, this scene demonstrates how these points of contact affect James. This encounter on the Pullman exemplifies what has been previously called vertical travel, where the movement of the tourist is not just about experiencing new destinations but also about traveling up and down the social ladder. For Cather, movement in and around the lower English classes creates enormous unease and causes her to make assertions about an idealized America. For James, downward travel causes an anxious retreat to his Europeanized and very elitist way of interpreting a scene. And that happens repeatedly in his travel writing: in *English Hours* with his treatment of London's poor, discussed in Chapter 1, and again more than twenty years later in *The American Scene* with his portrayal of immigrants and commercial travelers. James reconstitutes both groups as objects of his touristic gaze, understood here as a way of looking that emphasizes separateness, asserts the dominance of the looker, and transforms physical spaces—and especially *other* people—to pleasurable tourist sites. By doing that, James can control their destinies, force them into the background, transform anxiety into pleasure, and ensure that he remains the author of his (and their) experience.

Escaping into the Past

Although James discovers ways to alleviate the anxieties associated with touring modernity, he nonetheless clings to his notions about the relation between travel, the

picturesque, and the past. While he occasionally marches bravely into the modern scene, he still values architecture that “has something to say” and that compels you to “stop and listen to it” (*Little* 27, 28). The new American manner of design, he obstinately claims, “never begin[s] to speak to you” (*American* 61). Instead, James values those sites where the past remains a crucial part of the present, as in the Château de Blois, where “the sixteenth century closes round you” (*Little* 36). According to James, it “is a pardonable flight of fancy to say that the expressive faces of an age in which human passions lay very near the surface seem to peep at you from the windows, from the balconies, from the thick foliage of the sculpture” (*Little* 36). This ancient French structure exemplifies the permanence and duration that James values and too often finds lacking in the American landscape. In Europe, the past is a persistent part of national identity, of the historical narrative, and of the present moment. There, the past still informs the present. In America, the past seems disconnected from the present, and it serves as little more than a stepping stone to something bigger and more expensive. For James, as so many of his travel narratives indicate, travel represents an opportunity to immerse oneself in the past. It is the means by which one can escape into the safety of history, and it can take one back to a time when life seemed stable and constant. In his introduction to *English Hours*, Leon Edel reminds us that James “travels for the delight of his senses; he relishes the old, the picturesque, the noble antiquities, the idea of continuity and preservation—the sense of history that lives within the beauties and the uglinesses of the land” (vii). Thus, in Lichfield, James “walked about the silent streets, trying to repeople them with wigs and short-clothes” (*English* 120). In Warwickshire, he finds that “everything affected one as in some degree or another characteristic of a rich, powerful old-fashioned society. One

had no need of being told that this is a conservative county; the fact seemed written in the hedgerows and in the verdant acres behind them” (*English* 120). Here, James “had a feeling” that he could “find some very ancient and curious opinions still comfortably domiciled in the fine old houses” (120). Instances such as these indicate how leisurely passage through Europe can satisfy James’s desire to immerse himself in the felt experiences of travel and to enter spaces that actively preserve and nurture the past.

Modernity, by contrast, acts as a destabilizing force. According to Griselda Pollock, not only does it “uproot, deracinate, detraditionalize,” but it also makes it nearly “impossible” for the individual to achieve a “sense of belonging” (72). That “could only be found by a migration in time and space backwards to the pre-modern pasts where other people’s memories, or the fictions of them, could be ‘colonized’ to do service for what the Western moderns felt they had lost; to arm them against what they felt they were experiencing, a living death” (72). The obliteration of historical architecture threatens to eradicate every trace of the familiar, and the annihilation of these sites reiterates the tenuous place of history in America. It also demonstrates the decline of sentimental tourism. Although James “had often seen how fast history could be made,” he “had doubtless never so felt that it could be unmade still faster” (170). Rapid change marks the culture, and James laments that it is the “nature of many American impressions, accepted at the time as a whole of the particular story simply to cease to be, as soon as your back is turned—to fade, to pass away, to leave not a wreck behind” (334). The notion that things simply stop existing in America speaks to what James sees as a defining (and anxiety-inducing) aspect of the American condition. On New York’s Fourteenth Street, he experiences a “shudder” upon discovering

the complete disappearance of a large church, as massive a brown stone could make it, at the engaging construction of which one's tender years had 'assisted' (it exactly faced the paternal home, and nefarious, perilous play was found possible in the works), but which, after passing from youth to middle age and from middle age to antiquity, has vanished as utterly as the Assyrian Empire. (142)

The habitual decimation of these American spaces makes James's journey an anxious excursion into a labyrinth of absences and disappearances. The scenes reiterate the destructive forces of modernity and suggest the futility of even attempting to travel backwards in this ultra-modern nation. Although James's childhood memories live on and he attempts to inject his memories into the picture, the "complete disappearance" of this structure—there is no trace left—reasserts the challenges for the sentimental tourist in America.

Perhaps as an effort to situate himself in America's "pre-modern past" and to reclaim his conventional mode of touring, James flees to those places where the idea of "America" is constant—and idealized. He longs to momentarily escape the instability of the twentieth century and return to a time when the idea of America seemed steady.⁷¹

Thus, James makes his way to Mount Vernon, where he celebrates the preservation of history. At Mount Vernon, James can immerse himself in America's promise of freedom, democracy, and independence.⁷² History is alive here, and the "image" of Washington

⁷¹ Such journeys demonstrate the ways in which the "lures of an uncertain future were repudiated in favor of a preference for the fixtures of the present or," more specifically in James, "the memories of the past," to quote Arthur P. Dudden's "Nostalgia and the American" (517-18).

⁷² The pilgrimage to Philadelphia is similar. It also leads to a place where "the old ghosts, to our inward sensibility, still make the benches creak . . . still make the temperature rise, the pens scratch, the papers flutter . . . We know them, in fine, from the arch of their eyebrows to the shuffle of their shoes" (216). James sentimentally admits to losing himself in the "*whole* sense" of the place and reveals that his

“attends us while we move about and goes with us from room to room; mounts with us the narrow stairs, to stand with us in these small chambers and look out of low windows. . . Thus we arrive at the full meaning, as it were—thus we know, at least, why we are so moved” (249). For James, history becomes organic at Mount Vernon. There are more than “hard facts” here. Sensing the human quality of the past, James’s sense of self coalesces with history and transports him to a transcendent place where personal identity and national consciousness merge.⁷³

James’s tour of Mount Vernon also revivifies his relation to America itself. That is, it makes him feel more American. After his two decade absence, James is essentially a stranger to his own land, and that the absence was self-imposed further complicates his re-entry. While America was often the subject of his work, much of his life and sense of self were built upon a European or, more specifically, an English, model. A glance at James’s travel writing from his early period indicates that he willingly adopts a hybrid identity. In *English Hours*, he writes that his “reader will perceive that I do not shrink even from the extreme concession of speaking of our capital as British, and this in a shameless connection with the question of loyalty on the part of an adoptive son” (7). In

experience there is “intimate with the intimacy that I had tasted, from the first; in the local air; so that, inevitably, thus, there was no keeping of distinct accounts for public and private items” (217). In *The Bostonians*, Basil Ransom experiences a similar moment at Harvard’s Memorial Hall, where he and Verena take pause at the memorial built to honor those Harvard students who lost their lives in the Civil War. To Basil, the “monument around him seemed an embodiment of that memory; it arched over his friends as well as enemies, the victims of defeat as well as the sons of triumph” (232). “Sides” are no longer relevant, and there is a conflation of experience that Basil tacitly feels. In these idealized American spaces where history has been preserved (for posterity’s sake and to attract tourists) and where identity becomes fluid and James’s interactions with America’s past culminate in the momentary suspension of what is personal and what is public. His anxieties over modernity are held in abeyance, and his “I,” the past, and national identity momentarily become one.

⁷³ John F. Sears makes a similar observation in his Introduction to *The American Scene*. As he puts it, James “seems most content in places like Concord and Mount Vernon where, immersed in a bath of impressions, the historical past and unhurried present, the personal and the national, his individual consciousness and the surrounding scene are fused” (xix). See Sears, John F. Introduction. *The American Scene*. By Henry James. New York: Penguin, 1994. vii-xxii.

addition, he freely confesses “with conscious pride that he has submitted to Londonisation” and considers it a “stroke of luck” that the “capital of the human race happens to be British” (8). Such remarks indicate the duality of James’s identity; he is neither fully American nor fully English. Priscilla L. Walton calls James an individual of “indeterminate nationality” who exhibits a type of “outsider status” (26). According to Walton, he “does not fit neatly into any national category, being both American and English (perhaps even French) all at the same time” (35).

But at Mount Vernon, James seems secure in his American identity, and he is filled with a sense of patriotism. Robertson’s thoughts on the “survival” of the homeland in memory and the transformation of the returnee are especially useful here. According to Robertson, the “homeland that was left, forever lost, survives only in traces and memories, but the returned exile becomes a Janus-faced ‘translated person,’ a migrant with a cross-border hybrid identity” and a “particular cultural ‘voice’” (3). Though not a political exile, James’s “I” is revealed through a “cross-border” narrative, with just as many memories grounded in America as in Europe. But much of the physical evidence of his one, true “homeland,” nineteenth-century America, has been destroyed. Although the tour of his native spaces fractures his already divided identity and destabilizes his philosophy of touring, the pilgrimage to Mount Vernon temporarily places such sensations in abeyance. This idealized site helps James to overcome his anxiety, to see things through a familiar touristic lens, and to restore his American “I.” He becomes patriotic, and the “traces,” Robertson’s word, of America’s historical past reinforce his nostalgic perceptions of the nation (3). According to James, everything that he experiences at Mount Vernon, “to say nothing of other rich enhancements, above all

those that I may least specify flung over the day I scarce know what iridescent reflection of the star-spangled banner itself, in the folds of which I had never come so near the sense of being positively wrapped” (250). This image of James draped in the American flag indicates the possibilities of American spaces and bridges the gap between the past and present. More, it communicates how James’s sense of himself as an American changes in these moments. He embraces “America” as it once was—or as he imagines it once was—sheds his anxiety over his homeland, and becomes what H. G. Wells called a nostalgic, “retrospective American” (181).⁷⁴

Still, there are other moments when James’s identity is not so secure, and he constantly grapples with the problem of identifying himself in this modern-day America. While the narrative “I” certainly exists in *The American Scene*, it is not always clear what James means when he refers to himself as such. His rather self-conscious way of shifting back and forth between first and third person indicates an uncomfortable attempt to identify himself within this particular context. The postulation that his absence has given him “time to become almost as ‘fresh’ as an inquiring stranger” suggests that he has disassociated himself from his native identity (3). And that he calls himself a “victim, up to his neck” in “his subject” indicates just how overwhelmed he feels in this American space (8). Such comments occur early in James’s tour, and he effectively recreates that lost feeling that travelers experience upon arriving in an unfamiliar place. Moreover, that another traveler “was moved to say” to James, “I guess we manage our travelling here better than in *your* country” suggests that, at least in his appearance and perhaps his

⁷⁴ In *The Future in America*, Wells uses his identity as “a go-ahead Englishman” as his reason for not visiting Mount Vernon during his American tour in 1906. Because he “was not a retrospective American” and because of his “want of reverence for venerable things,” Wells opts, instead, to visit Capitol Hill, where he watches “the senate debating the Railway Rates bill” (181).

mannerisms, James does not seem American at all (311). His fellow citizens look upon him as an outsider, and that only heightens his self-consciousness about his inability to fit into this space.

Yet, he also considers himself an “initiated native,” a secure, self-identified American (3), and that he repeatedly refers to himself as a “restored absentee” implies that James does feel a sense of belonging and that his return has succeeded in bridging the gap caused by his absence (90).⁷⁵ However, that last label is deceptive. It seems to suggest that James’s insider status has been reestablished, but he typically uses the characterization in moments of special anxiety when his distress is most acute. For example, he uses it when considering his relation to this “too large” country and when he realizes that attempting to “deal with it” is a “vain” exercise (93). According to James, there is simply “too much of the whole thing . . . for a personal relation with it,” even though he admits that “he would desire no inch less for the relation that he describes to himself best perhaps either as the provisionally-imaginative or as the distantly respectful” (94). And in Boston, he calls himself a “restored absentee” when touring the Public Library, a place that he describes as “so inexpressibly vacant” (182). To James, the site seems more “committed” to the “power of the purse” and the “higher turn of business than of the old intellectual, or even of the old moral, sensibility” (184). In each of these incidents, James refers to himself in the third person, and that practice, like his labels, creates distance between himself and what he sees. Perhaps it allows him to view the machinations of American society more objectively. But, it may also provide a means of preserving his fragile sense of self in a world that has changed beyond recognition. By constantly advancing toward and retreating from his native spaces, James shows that he

⁷⁵ See also pages 93, 96, 125, 136, 160, 175, 185, and 203.

can neither comfortably observe from the margins nor step fully into the bristling center. He places himself in an odd middle ground of constantly shifting planes.

There are moments, though, when his confidence as an artist supersedes his distress and when these classifications reaffirm James's sense of self. When he calls himself an "incurable man of letters," he speaks in the first person. He makes the comment in an anxious moment, when considering the "future ravage" of "our language," but he keeps a firm hold on his identity (105). He confesses that it was "I" who "gasped," and that pronoun actually reveals his security. His worries are related to the fate of English "in the States" and, in those three words, James finds solace in identifying an American problem (106). These are challenges faced by writers "in the United States," and that refrain bolsters his surety of self and verifies that English in England is secure (105). Still, James's confidence is perhaps no more evident than when he refers to himself as a "visionary tourist" (82). Operating under this moniker, James does two things. First, he harnesses the "ubiquitous American force" that he sees in "vivid view" in places like the Waldorf-Astoria. In the "very expensive air" of this hotel, James locates the "intensest examples of the American character" (81). But rather than retreating or criticizing, though he has certainly done that before, James finds that he "would have liked to see it more and more intimately at work," a remark that transforms this anxious space into a touristic site that can be penetrated and visually explored (82). But that is not all. He also reflects on how he remembers the Waldorf-Astoria. His portrayal of the scene reveals how, through artistry and imagination, James seizes control of the very places that most disturb him. He asks:

What may one say of such a spirit if not that he understands, so to speak, the forces he sways, understands his boundless American material and plays with it like a master indeed? One sees it thus, in its crude plasticity, almost in the likeness of an army of puppets whose strings the wealth of his technical imagination teaches him innumerable ways of pulling, and yet whose innocent, whose always ingenuous agitation of their members he has found means to make them think of themselves as delightfully free and easy. (82)

In this passage, James asserts his mastery and ability to shape this material to suit his own desires. The American character here is pliable and undeveloped, and the “master” controls the “whole effect” (82). James also appears to have a sense of dual control here, for he situates himself both inside and outside of the narrative. Not only does he write down these images and impressions for a book, but he is also a part of the scene itself, acting like a puppet master and shaping the “spirit” from within. As both author and participant, James has full control over his subject, and it no longer distresses him. Still, James fears that his “impression” would be ruined if he ever returned to the Waldorf, and that alone reveals a breach in his confidence, but that he can imagine a scenario where he has total dominance over the scene calms James’s psychological state and provides a momentary sense of control.

James’s escape into the past does not end at Mount Vernon. He continues through Philadelphia and, although Elizabeth Pennell complains about how the infiltration of immigrants has transformed the city, James sees it as a space with a visible presence of

the past.⁷⁶ According to James, no other place in the country, with the exception of Mount Vernon, has done so much to preserve “our historic past” (213). In Philadelphia, the nation’s historical past “enjoy[s] the felicity of an ‘important’ concrete illustration. It survives there in visible form as it nowhere else survives” (213). For James, the city’s historical sites become sacred ground because they are the physical embodiment of the past and the ideologies that he values. Thus, while travel writer Joel Cook calls Independence Hall “the most hallowed building of American patriotic memories” (161), James claims that the structure is “the very prize, the sacred thing itself, contended for and gained; so that its quality, in fine, is irresistible and its dignity not to be uttered” (216). R. D. Gooder examines James’s reaction to these scenes, and he suggests that in Philadelphia, James discovers, “in tangible form, many of the ‘ideas’” that he had been pursuing (25). According to Gooder, the city represented “spiritual independence, political liberty, and the wealth with which to sustain and exploit them, all bound together in an unshakeable commitment to virtue” (25). Such remarks assert a truism about the relation between James’s way of touring and his value system. Indeed, his travel writing consistently emphasizes this connection. As he surveys the Cathedral in Milan, James becomes convinced that the “main point” of “great architecture,” even more than “beauty,” is:

mass—such mass as may make it a supreme embodiment of vigorous effort. Viewed in this way a great building is the greatest conceivable

⁷⁶ In fact, James writes about it as an unchanging space characterized by a “soothing truth that Philadelphia was, yes, beyond cavil, solely and singly Philadelphian” (208). Throughout his tour of the city, he notes the absence of the immigrant, though he acknowledges that they “may have been gathered, in their hordes, in some vast quarter unknown to me and of which I was to have no glimpse” (208). Pennell responds to James’s remarks in *Our Philadelphia* and she expresses relief that the city “had held on to enough of its character and beauty to impress the stranger, anyway, with the fine serenity that I missed at every turn” (509). The difference, of course, is that she “knew what Philadelphia had been” (509).

work of art. More than any other it represents difficulties mastered, resources combined, labour, courage and patience. And there are people who tell us that art has nothing to do with morality!" (*Italian* 42)

In this analysis, James represents the quintessential "picturesque traveler" who blends beauty and art and "morality" in a way that endows architecture—brick and paint and mortar—with a specified meaning. From this cathedral in Milan to New York's Trinity Church, James feverishly searches for signs of moral integrity, perseverance, and bravery in physical spaces. Thus, tourism and the travel narrative become tools for the projection and dissemination of his aesthetic philosophies, his hierarchical way of ordering society, and his particular ideological system.

At the same time, from *A Little Tour of France* to *Italian Hours*, the travel narrative exposes the ways in which a voracious appetite for the picturesque propels James forward from one site to another. Travel provides endless opportunities for James to immerse himself in the historical impressions and auras that he believes inhabit certain sites. Put simply, James craves and consumes tourism in a capitalistic way. He asserts that the "expensive" is like "a train covering ground at maximum speed and pushing on" and, like a train that surges ahead, James's desire and his schedule keep him moving from one place to another, where he looks, judges, and then goes on to the next site (*American* 11). Even the ubiquitous Pullman, though James loathes it, facilitates his movement and signifies his journey as a continuous commercial passage from one site to another and another. That constant craving for the next transcendent scene suggests a relation between James's way of touring and consumerist capitalism. In consideration of Dreiser's seemingly "insatiable attraction" for small towns, Totten suggests that, in the "literature

of travel, the chase for the next object often becomes a chase for the next image fueling both the traveler's journey and desire" (29). Surely, for James, this touristic pursuit is linked to an intent to recover some aspect of a fading past; to find a space where he can "see" things through a sentimental, European gaze; retrieve American history and thus revivify his bond with the nation; and escape modernity. But, his perpetual desire for and pursuit of the next "picture" also mimics the consumer's materialistic longing for the next new thing on the market. As in a marketplace, James moves through various tourist sites, driven always by a desire to gather more impressions and experiences. Thus, while Independence Hall is sacred because one can feel history there, it also becomes a "contended for and gained" "prize" with a "quality" that is "irresistible" (216).

As James makes his way southward, he continues to seek out spaces that feed his "aesthetic appetite" (280). In Richmond, he hopes to find a "waiting provision of vivid images, mainly beautiful and sad" that will propel him backwards to the antebellum South. He wants to experience an "intensity of impression" and "take in at every pore a Southern expression" (271). Such desires would likely scandalize Basil Ransom of *The Bostonians*, who is unable to even speak of his beloved South to the "roomful of Northern fanatics" that he finds himself in (46). Unlike James, whose touristic approach to the South indicates his perception of it as a spectacle, Ransom feels that one must "be quiet about the Southern land, not . . . touch her with vulgar hands" (46). To Ransom, she should be left "alone with her wounds and her memories" (46). In hopes of stirring those same memories, James travels to Richmond with an "aimed appetite for sharp impressions" (296). He admits that what he had "most wanted" was nothing more than

“some small inkling (a mere specimen-scrap would do) of the sense, as I have to keep forever calling my wanton synthesis, of ‘the South before the War’” (297).

Thus, he rushes into Richmond and moves from one site to another, gazing upon any number of relics, yet deciding that these mementos fail to evoke his longed-for sensations. He tours the famed Confederate Museum and finds rooms filled with a number of “old Confederate documents . . . framed letters, orders, autographs” and photos, but concludes that they are only “sorry objects . . . already sallow with time” (232). He visits the monument to General Lee, which “stands high aloft and extraordinarily by itself, at the far end of the main residential street” and possesses “artistic interest,” but he finds it nonetheless pitiful. When the onlooker turns away, the statue is left “alone, communing” with the “very heaven of futility” (290). According to James, no “single object of beauty” exists here, and there is “scarce one in fact that was not altogether ugly” (282). Thus, his entire attempt to tour Richmond fails. Rather than preserving and illuminating the past, and rather than satiating his touristic desires, this scene merely exposes “the historic poverty of Richmond” (290).

On one hand, James’s disappointment conveys his lingering anxiety over the Civil War. The memories are too fresh. The pain has not yet healed, and the sins of the South’s past inhibit James’s ability to obtain pleasure from his movement there. As his previous travel narratives demonstrate, this is a new experience for James. In *English Hours*, he writes about visiting Broughton Castle and about going out “to see the battlefield” where the 1642 Battle of Edgehill took place (126). After paying his “respects to another old house which is full of memories and suggestions of that most dramatic period of English history,” James turns his eye to a “beautiful sculptured doorway which admits you into

the small, quaint inner court” where you “pass through the crookedest series of oaken halls and chambers, adorned with treasures of old wainscoting and elaborate doors and chimneypieces” (126, 127). As an American tourist in England, James benefits from distance and from a lack of emotional proximity, and that gives him the luxury of gazing at these ancient scenes of destruction with an idealized lens.

But, no such lens exists in Richmond. He blames the failure of his Southern tour on the “collapse of the old order, the humiliation of defeat” (284) and on the Southern relics, which simultaneously pay homage to and reiterate the “very bitterness of the immense, grotesque, defeated project . . . of a vast Slave State” (274). Thus, the displeasures associated with touring this space stem from his closeness to the war and the too-real ghosts that haunt the site. However, James’s consumeristic approach to these sites also contributes to the failure of his tour. He rushes through the city yearning to collect a “scrap” of history (297). Gilpin might suggest that James’s actions in Richmond exemplify the “first source of amusement to the picturesque traveller . . . the *pursuit* of his object” and the “expectation of new scenes” (140). However, James has an unusual obsession with the pre-war South and the ““Southern character”” (273). And there is no transcendence here; only a disappointing tour of a place that “was *weak*—‘adorably’ weak” (274). In Richmond, he repeatedly confesses a peculiar desire to witness a “sort of registered consciousness of the past,” and he wants to tour “old Southern mansions” (272, 273). Hoping to gather a few “scant handfuls” of the past and then leave with a feeling of satisfaction, James enters this space with little more than a desire to gawk at the Southern spectacle. Moreover, James presents himself as a traveler who knows “*how* to look” (271). As he puts it, “if one *can* see straight, one takes in the whole piece at a series of

points that are after all comparatively few” (271). Such comments suggest the conveniences of using one’s tourist’s eye to get the most out of a particular scene in the least amount of time and also reveal James’s troubling touristic approach to the South.

The Pleasures of Travel

The problems with his touristic gaze, as well as the cycle of destruction and reconstruction that James witness in America, violates James’s connection with the nation’s sites and dismantles—or at least challenges—notions of travel as a pleasurable activity. Still, there are a few places, in addition to Mount Vernon and Philadelphia, where touring becomes a decidedly pleasurable venture. While in Baltimore, James visits the Carroll House, an “ancient home without lapses or breaks, where the past and the present were in friendliest fusion, so that the waiting future evidently slumbered with confidence” (244). But although he admires the historical home for nurturing this past-present continuum, he also eroticizes the satisfaction that he obtains there, and tourism thus emerges as a means for fulfilling psychosexual desire. In describing how he spent his time there, James writes about wandering “from one impression to another” all the while keeping “with intensity, that of the admirable outlying Park, treasure of the town, through which I had already three or four times driven, but the holiday life of which, on the warm Sunday night, humming, languidly, under the stars, as with spent voices of the homeward-bound, attested more than ever its valuable function” (243). And after describing this thoroughly romantic setting and confessing his nearly insatiable desire to return again and again to the Park, James calls the experience a “pleasant incoherence” and then admits that his visit to the Carroll house was the “climax of an afternoon drive,” nay, “the climax of

everything” (243). For James, the home exudes a “really ripe architectural charm,” and it makes an “insidious appeal” to him (243). Such erotically charged commentary denotes another type of pleasure that may be obtained through travel, and his commentary serves as a confession of the relation between the sensory and sensual experience of travel and erotic satisfaction. When he writes about New York’s Public Library, his expression of satisfaction is even more sexualized, and the assertion of tourism as a route to such gratification is even more overt. Praising the library for not being a “‘tall’ building,” James writes: “Any building that, being beautiful, presents itself as seated rather than as standing, can do with your imagination what it will; you ask it no question, you give it a free field, content only if it will sit and sit and sit” (139). James’s remarks imply a total surrender, not a passive acceptance of anxiety, but a voluntary submission to pleasure.

In *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault writes about the consensual sexual act, the quintessential act of pleasure, and yet he demonstrates in his analysis of sexuality from the Greeks onward that “the sexual act” can actually foment anxiety “because it disturbed and threatened the individual’s relationship with himself” (137). Although James’s Baltimore excursion and his remarks on the library expand notions of touristic satisfaction, there are countless other sites that he visits that disrupt and even deny such fulfillment. Thus, travel can “occasion anxiety” because, like the sex act, it has the potential to disturb and endanger the individual’s sense of self and relationship to the past (137). It can even tempt the traveler to stop any forward motion and find a place of stasis. When James returns to No. 13 Ashburton Place in Boston as a nostalgic tourist on a pilgrimage to recover the past, this home provides physical evidence of his place in history. It is a crucial—and palpable—element of his life’s narrative because it represents

a brick and mortar symbol of his life and history. By returning, James hopes to “recover on the spot some echo of ghostly footsteps—the sound as of taps on the window pane heard in the dim dawn. The place itself,” for James, was “a conscious memento, with old secrets to keep and old stories to witness for, a saturation of life as closed together and preserved in it as the scent lingering in a folded pocket-handkerchief” (170). In a sense, his journey resembles the pleasures and consequences associated with the completed sex act. If such an act grants pleasure, reinforces one’s positive sense of self, reaffirms mutual affection, and even results in the birth of offspring, then the journey of the sperm fulfills its highest purpose. More, the individual’s sense of self is also reinforced, expanded, and given the promise of immortality when the child is born. Can a physical journey do the same thing, or at least something comparable? Perhaps. James’s pilgrimage to Ashburton Place is pleasurable, and he gazes upon a “pair of ancient houses” with sentimental eyes (170). He is completely “occupied . . . with reading into” one of the houses “a short page” of his own “history” (170). The stop at this location provides the type of encounter with the past that James perpetually seeks out in his travels, and it allows him to experience what Collister has referred to as “a physical retrieval” of his youth (13). But even more than that, the excursion to this home solidifies James’s sense of self and his relation to history while also providing a physical memorial to his life. As long as this house stands, there will be tactile evidence of his life. Its survival offers the reassurance of James’s immortality because, as he himself has shown, physical spaces bridge the gap between the past and present, and between memory, perpetuity, and nothingness (13).

However, when James returns to the site a month later, he finds a vacant lot where the Ashburton Place home had once stood. In that moment, his absolute sense of “Henry James” is decimated. The loss makes him feel as if his memories have been ripped away, as if his own history has vanished. He writes that it “was as if the bottom had fallen out of one’s own biography, and one plunged backward into space without meeting anything” (170). The “act of obliteration” thrusts James into a place of non-identity where two years of his life seem to no longer exist, leaving a “gaping void” in his life narrative (170). As Collister puts it, the physical destruction of the home “causes a dizzying, disorientating loss of identity as history itself unravels” (35). Similarly, when James discovers that his birthplace at 21 Washington Place has also been leveled, he mourns the “brutal effacement . . . of the whole precious past” (170) and confesses that the loss has caused a “rupture” in his identity (171). For James, the “effect was of having been amputated of my past” (171). Such language suggests a psychological castration, and James feels as if he were experiencing from a violent separation from his own history. He has lost the physical evidence of his own past. Thus, the journey back to his native grounds, a once pleasurable act, culminates in the greatest fear associated with the anxiety of travel—losing one’s “I.” The long-awaited tour that could have been reaffirming instead disturbs and disrupts James’s sense of self, propels him into an existential crisis, and threatens to dismantle his past-present continuum.

While traveling in England, Hawthorne observed a similar connection to the past among the English. According to Hawthorne, they believed that physical sites and personal identity were linked and that new construction did not justify the demolition of the old. While touring Warwick, Hawthorne saw “shops with modern plate glass, and

buildings with stuccoed fronts,” yet they were only façades, “renovated faces” (64). Hawthorne felt that “behind” these modern exteriors, there was “probably the substance of the same old town that wore a Gothic exterior in the Middle Ages” (64). In England, the “new things” were “based and supported on sturdy old things,” and they derived “massive strength from their deep and immemorial foundations” (64). That ideology is reflected in James’s own sense of place and history, and it helps to explain why America makes him so anxious. While Europe has a tradition of updating and renovating, America actively demolishes and eliminates the “substance” of its past.

Hawthorne also wrote about how the English absorb history and how it becomes an aspect of their own identity. According to Hawthorne, the “Englishman”

likes to feel the weight of all the past upon his back; and, moreover, the antiquity that overburdens him has taken root in his being, and has grown to be rather a hump than a pack, so that there is no getting rid of it without tearing his whole structure to pieces. (64-65)

Hawthorne recognized the dramatic connection between the English and their history, and he considered the dangers of separating the two. But the language that Hawthorne used to describe such an event contrasts greatly with James’s. Hawthorne alluded to a particular type of violence that uproots and destroys. It is understood that such a separation would irreversibly alter the individual’s identity, but Hawthorne’s language does not suggest a sexual danger.

James’s commentary on the demolition of the Ashburton Place home conveys such sentiments, and the loss clearly damages his sense of self and his relation to the past. But in addition to that, he sexualizes the experience and portrays it and perhaps himself

as an object of castration. His “connection” to the site had been “broken short off,” and the impression left in his “hands” is “inapt, as might be for use; so that I could only try, rather vainly, to fit it to present conditions, among which it tended to shrink and stray” (171). For James, the loss of the Ashburton Place home supersedes the relation between place and identity. It penetrates deeply into the psyche and damages the psychosexual self and seemingly causes a reemergence of childhood fears related to castration. It could be that the realization that he was there just a day before these homes were razed generates such a sense of helplessness that James associates that feeling with what he interprets as the ultimate powerlessness. If that is the case, his inability to save the homes makes him feel as if he has been unmanned. Or, it may be that these homes were what Freud would call “highly valued objects” and that James suffers from the anxiety that can emerge as “a reaction to the felt loss of the object” (66). Thus, the actual experience of losing these homes, nay, of having them so abruptly taken from him, causes the fear of castration to re-emerge from his subconscious, and James’s self-confessed feelings of loss serve as a reassertion of those fears.

Molly Vaux, who also analyzes the events at Ashburton Place, takes a different approach. She considers how the loss of these spaces affects James as an “artist.” According to Vaux, the wrecking of the Ashburton home results in a loss of “reference points” which causes “the artist” to “fall out of time.”⁷⁷ James’s identity as an artist is never far from the fore in *The American Scene*. His prefatory reminder that he has always been “artistically concerned” with the “question of literary representation” (4), his use of painterly language, and his confessed struggles with “rendering” certain scenes make

⁷⁷ Vaux’s article, entitled “Vindication Against Misreading in *The Golden Bowl*, *The American Scene*, and *The New York Edition*” is an online article without any page numbers.

such a reading possible (68). However, the loss of No. 13 Ashburton Place, coupled with the loss of his birthplace in Washington Place, affects James on a deeply personal and psychological level, and it would be reductive to limit one's analysis to James the artist. When he returns to these homes, James is a nostalgic tourist who longs to hear an "echo" of "ghostly footsteps" and who returns just "to see if another whiff of the fragrance were not to be caught" (170). Such actions overwhelmingly point to the personal nature of this journey. Moreover, these sites have become "monuments of private worth" for James (71). He had, in his "inner sense," "positively erected . . . a commemorative mural tablet" to his birthplace, and he is devastated—and furious—that "the very wall that should have borne this inscription has been smashed" (71). These structures, then, are no mere points of reference for James as an artist, and his expressions of amputation, loss, and rupture compellingly demonstrate how one's personal and psychosexual identities can be annihilated by travel.⁷⁸

Because this type of movement can be so destructive to one's sense of self, it is not surprising that anxious American travelers eventually seek out those places where the

⁷⁸ Of course, I do not deny that James takes inspiration from these events. In "The Jolly Corner," he writes about how Spencer Brydon seeks out his own sacred landmarks in an effort to recapture a sense, even a whisper, of the past. Like James, Brydon believes that there is an indelible relation between the past, personal identity, and physical spaces. At the same time, Brydon seems very Jamesian as he walks through the house in the Jolly Corner:

He spoke of the value of all he read into it, into the mere sight of the walls, mere shapes of the rooms, mere sound of the floors, mere feel, in his hand, of the old silver-plated knobs of the several mahogany doors, which suggested the pressure of the palms of the dead; the seventy years of the past in fine that these things represented, the annals of nearly three generations, counting his grandfather's, the one that had ended there, and the impalpable ashes of his long-extinct youth, afloat in the very air like microscopic motes. (377)

For Brydon, every aspect of this scene serves as a palpable reminder of those who lived there. It is no longer just a home; it is a memorial. Yet, James primarily speaks of his former dwellings in physical terms, and he even claims that the "old still faces" of the Ashburton Place home possessed a "cold consciousness of a possible doom" (170). Brydon, by contrast, uses words such as "suggested" and "impalpable," and he comments on a life "that had ended there." Such remarks indicate an awareness of the limits of physical spaces, suggest that maybe there is no real connection between place and identity, and point to the fleeting nature of life itself. The comments may even imply that James himself has reassessed the relation between the past and such sites.

forward motion of travel can be slowed or even stopped. After Cather's distressing tour of England, she makes her way through France and settles briefly in "a little villa of white stucco, with a red tiled roof and a little stone porch, built in the pines" of Lavandou, a village with fewer than one hundred residents (944). While in Lavandou, the work and stresses associated with touring are alleviated. Cather spends her time lounging about the house, "wrapped in a steamer rug" and gazing out "at this great water that seems to trail its delft-blue mantle across the world" (945). Her only work is to "gather" lavender "blossoms" (945). The escape from the rigors of touring is so complete that Cather even reimagines her identity. No longer travel-weary Americans, she and McClung now possess a "villa on the Mediterranean," and they are the "potentates of a principality of pines" (944). Cather fancies that they are residing in a "manor," that they "have a demesne as well," and that in their leisurely comings and goings they "have made the acquaintance of certain neighboring princes and princesses whose kingdoms lie round about" (945). While such pretending injects a bit of playfulness into what has been a tremendously fraught journey, assuming this persona also provides Cather with an opportunity to reconstruct her bruised identity and envision herself as European and as possessing a particular type of power, leisure, and authority typically associated with royalty. This new identity gives her special access to the European scene and—even more—it ensures her authority over it. In Lavandou, then, travel, anxiety, and Cather's insecurities over identity come to a definite halt, and the sense that the self can be decimated by movement into uncanny spaces is terminated.

The American Scene reveals that James, too, looks for ways to decelerate—or even reverse—the pace of his journey. While still moving, he searches for sites where his

anxiety is alleviated and travel becomes pleasurable again. James's excursions to historical spaces, such as Mount Vernon and Philadelphia, allow him to slow down travel and regain a sense of control. Concord, too, represents a space of tremendous historic value "where so little had changed" (193). But another aspect of the town differentiates it from these other destinations. According to James, Concord "had the very aspect of some grave, refined New England matron of the 'old school,' the widow of high celebrity, living on and on in possession of all his relics and properties" (192). He fancies that from "her high-backed chair by the window that commands most of the coming and going, she looks up intelligently, over her knitting, and with nothing indeed to suggest the possibility of a limit save a hint of that loss of temporal perspective in which we recognize the mental effect of a great weight of years" (192). In this droll portrayal of a city as a straight-laced matriarch passing the day knitting in her rocking chair, James nonetheless finds comfort in the domestic, gentle-but-"rigid" attributes of Concord. That he describes this city in such matronly terms suggests a desire to discover sites that evoke a particular sense of security. Perhaps James seeks out these domesticated or tame scenes in response to a psychological craving for the type of idealized continuity and stability that he associates with the nineteenth century. To be clear, this is not to suggest that James has embarked upon the type of Lacanian retreat that Dreiser engages in. His return to Indiana is self-consciously bound to a desire to reclaim his boyhood and is an attempt to use travel as a means of getting back to his mother. By contrast, James's passage through America may be interpreted as a search for spaces and scenes that evoke the orderly and hierarchical nineteenth-century society that he grew up in and that continues to thrive in Europe. It is close to Dreiser's intent to re-enter the Imaginary, but rather than

a quest that will return him to his mother and his childhood, James travels as a means of recovering and memorializing a particular social order. If anything, his journey, in Lacanian terms, reveals his intent to reassert the Symbolic Order, an historical system of signs made of up language and culture.

When James travels through Farmington, Connecticut, he encounters “good” homes that demonstrate integrity, and he speaks of them—not as a returning son—but as a tourist searching for a dignified domestic scene with “charming aspects and high refinements” (34). Gazing upon the residential communities of Farmington, he claims that they demonstrate the “luxury of culture” and the “upliftedness of posture” of this New England town (34). According to James, the houses “show style and form and proportion, and the hand of time, further, has been so good as to rest on them with all the pressure of protection and none of that of interference” (34). Furthermore, he imagines that if these homes could speak, they would acknowledge their excellence and:

make no vulgar noise about it: we only just stand here, in our long double line, in the manner of mature and just slightly-reduced gentlewomen seated against the wall at an evening party . . . and neither too boldly affront the light nor shrink from the favouring shade. (34-35)

Once again, James evokes the image of a matron and constructs a scene of orderly comfort and security. Though he cannot enter these homes or their immediate New England world because he is a tourist, merely passing through, the stability of these scenes advances his psychological journey and takes him to a place of emotional surety rather than alienation and despair.

In James's own life, there was always a distinct separation between the outer world of business and the "inward" world of the home (*Small* 30). Leon Edel explains that while James was well-traveled and exposed to European culture as a boy, his childhood was still insular. According to Edel, James "knew that people went into offices and stores (though his father never did) and that they made money—yet the process of making it other than by writing was forever a mystery to him" (*Henry* 32). In *A Small Boy and Others*, James recalls that "business in the world of business was the thing we most agreed . . . in knowing nothing about. We touched it and it touched us neither directly nor otherwise" (31). He calls this lack of entanglement in the business world one of "those felicities of destitution which kept us, collectively, so genially interested in almost nothing but each other and which come over me now as one of the famous blessings in disguise" (31). At the same time, James associates the physical home with "continuity, responsibility, transmission" (12). He believes that "the human home" wants to "lead the life it has begun" and that it "only asks to enfold generations and gather in traditions, to show itself capable of growing up to character and authority" (86). Thus, James cherishes home life that not only emphasizes the family but which is isolated from the exterior world. He values houses that, structurally, reassert this separation and promote privacy.⁷⁹

Along the Jersey Shore, exquisite new homes with their garish façades unabashedly "confessed to their extreme expensiveness" and project a quality of

⁷⁹ In *The Portrait of a Lady*, James imagines a residence that, at least by its physical appearance, reinforces his notions about privacy. Gardencourt's ivy, its creeper-covered windows, and the entrance of the house, which is not even located in the front of the house—"this was in quite another quarter"—act as a buttress, protecting the estate and reinforcing the notion that privacy "reined supreme" (20). Even the "great still oaks and beeches flung down a shade as dense as that of velvet curtains," suggesting that nature has altered itself and is an active participant in the struggle against publicity (20, 21).

impermanence (10). According to James, these structures “practically” admitted that they “don’t in the least care what becomes of us after we have served our present purpose” (12). Moreover, their temporary natures reveal what James considers an even more unsettling loss, of privacy. Despite their exquisite exteriors, the homes lack the “highest luxury of all”--“constituted privacy,” which can only be provided by the structure itself (12).⁸⁰ James objects to these homes because they clash with his ideological notions of what the home itself should be—a private place, a secretive, even uncanny space. These structures seem rather similar to the extravagant hotels that he sees across the nation. In the “amazing hotel world,” James discerns the “conception of publicity *as* the vital medium organized with the authority with which the American genius for organization, put on its mettle, alone could organize” (78, 81). As the “hotel-spirit” seems to “*be* the American-spirit most seeking and most finding itself,” and as this contributes to the dissolution of “private life,” these palatial homes likewise expel any possibility for privacy (79). It “was as if the projection had been so completely outward that one could but find one’s self almost uneasy about the mere perspective required for the common acts of personal life, that minimum vagueness as to what takes place in it for which the complete ‘home’ aspires to provide” (12). The occupants of such structures, according to James, are “doomed” to “unmitigated publicity, publicity as a condition, from which there could be no appeal” (11).⁸¹ These homes, then, invite publicity and, as a tourist, James casts a penetrating gaze onto these spaces, yet in doing so, he crosses a boundary

⁸¹ In *A Hoosier Holiday*, Dreiser also witnesses this phenomenon. He reports that the “inhabitants” of England and “even at Monte Carlo” typically “seek a kind of privacy even in their summer gaieties—an air of reserve and exclusiveness” (206). By contrast, the wealthy vacationers in Geneva Beach, Ohio swung open their homes as if to defy any and all brushes with seclusion. The “lawns, doors and windows of the cottages and boarding houses were open to the eyes of all the world. There were no fences . . . All the immediate vicinity seemed to be a-summering, and it wanted everyone to know it” (206).

that he himself has set. Even though he believes in the home as a private space, he cannot stop looking. By their very natures, James suggests, these homes want you to look; they indecently show themselves. And the lack of privacy for the most basic “acts” of life that take place there, perhaps an ambiguous reference to the sex act, makes him uneasy. Thus, James’s caustic assessment of these sexualized domestic spaces could stem from a sense of guilt, from imagining what takes place in those homes and from his own desire to look at something forbidden.

The closing pages of *The American Scene* show James staring out the window of a Pullman, leaving Florida behind and turning his thoughts westward, to California. He is “haunted” by his journey through the South, and he forlornly considers the “ugly, wintering, waiting world” before him (339). As he gazes out at the landscape through a “great square of plate glass,” he refuses to “admire the achievements” that the train seems to proclaim (342). While the Pullman boasts: “See what I’m making of all this—see what I’m making, what I’m making,” James heatedly rebukes the “pretended message of civilization” that America proffers (341). Moving forward into “the vast and exquisite void,” James laments that his “shrine” is “but an institution of yesterday, a wondrous floating tea-house or restaurant, inflated again with the hotel-spirit and exhaling modernity at every pore” (339). The America that James once knew has all but vanished, yet he continues his search for continuity, for what once was, for some connection between the past and this new twentieth-century America.

James’s 1904-05 journey back to his native home is characterized by conflicting desires: to see the New World and to pay homage to the past. Along the way, he travels to

unsettling modern scenes that leave him feeling lost and anxious, and he tours once-familiar places that have been completely transformed or have vanished altogether. Although he struggles to resituate himself in this uncanny America, his decision to press forward into the unfamiliar, to place himself in the middle of the modern world, results in the transformation of his own aesthetic and alters his way of conceptualizing modernity. By the end of *The American Scene*, James has re-claimed his “I” but only, it seems, because he has come to expect bristling sights and because he has discovered a way to use his gaze to control unruly scenes, obtain pleasure from travel, and calm his anxieties. He also hopes to discover “the impression of History all yet to be made” in California (340). As James settles into his seat and gazes out the Pullman window, his touristic desire begins to tug again. Longingly, he searches for some “unbridgeable abyss or an insuperable mountain” (342), for a space where he can at least dream of American scenes that may be viewed with a European eye.

Conclusion

Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchers of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe?

--Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature."

In *Our Old Home*, Hawthorne writes about his disappointing tour of Warwick Castle. Although some tourists would blame the castle itself and some critics might interrogate his idealized approach to the site, Hawthorne posits that tourism is the problem. He claims that the "sight of that long series of historic rooms, full of such splendor and rarities as a great English family necessarily gathers about itself in its hereditary abode, and in the lapse of ages, is well worth the money, or ten times as much, if indeed the value of the spectacle could be reckoned in money's-worth" (62).

Hawthorne depicts the castle as a sacred historical space and reveals the pleasure that looking at such displays provides. Yet, the highly orchestrated tour spoils these initial impressions. The "disenchantment" begins after an "attendant," who perfunctorily recites a "guide-book by rote," hurries Hawthorne from one "end of the edifice" to another. The tour effectively exorcises "each successive hall of its poetic glamour and witchcraft" and hastens Hawthorne's "doleful discovery that Warwick Castle has ceased to be a dream" (62). The experience disillusiones Hawthorne and provokes him to argue that it is "better" to "linger on the bridge," to distance oneself from these sites, and to:

keep them as thought in your own mind, than climb to their summits, or touch even a stone of their actual substance. They will have all the more reality to you, as stalwart relics of immemorial time, if you are reverent enough to leave them in the intangible sanctity of a poetic vision. (62-63)

For Hawthorne, the guided tour diminishes the castle's mystery and violates his sentimental notions about this historic structure. The myth, for this traveler, is preferable to the reality. Concluding that it is better to simply gaze upon such scenes than to enter them, Hawthorne anticipates the anxieties that plague twentieth-century travelers.

Hawthorne's experience elucidates the problems of interpretation, the traveler's gaze, and the chasm between one's perception of a space and its actuality. In his visit to Warwick Castle and in his "rural walks" through "hamlets of thatched cottages, ancient, solitary farm-houses, picturesque old mills, streamlets, pools, and all those quiet, secret, unexpected, yet strangely familiar features of English scenery that Tennyson shows us in his idyls and eclogues," Hawthorne epitomizes the nineteenth-century travel aesthetic (48). Like many of his fellow Americans, he was a "picturesque traveler" who longed to explore localities made popular by English history, poetry, and guide books. But by the turn of the century, modernization and the changing American ethos altered how tourists perceived these sites and even travel itself. In this study, Willa Cather's articles represent that first challenge to the nineteenth-century method of tourism. Although Hawthorne's remarks at Warwick Castle anticipate her distress, Cather's anxiety compels her to move beyond conventional sites and mythological territories. She seeks a more authentic, less idealized world, and records the contradictions between the travel-book version of the Old World and the harsher, more interesting (to her) expression of twentieth-century life there. Her concentration on the people and their relation to these ancient spaces uncovers new retreats and projects an anti-stereotypical portrait of Europe's cultural geography. By refusing to retrace Hawthorne's path to predictable sites, Cather raises questions about how Americans should experience Europe and how travel should be written. As if

heeding Emerson's admonitions in *Nature*, she seeks out an "original relation" with travel, and her articles document that "face to face" encounter.

In addition, Cather's articles illuminate the relation between the travel narrative and fiction. That is, her travel writing provides a new way of thinking about her novels. Scholars typically understand *Death Comes for the Archbishop* as an historical or artistic narrative or a disguised immigrant text, and issues related to gender and assimilation usually guide discussions of *My Antonia*. Yet, in re-reading these texts, I wondered if Cather was revisiting her first touristic struggle in Europe. Perhaps these books represent an attempt to reimagine her own anxious travels. In *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, missionaries Father Latour and Father Vaillant are bound by duty to travel, to remain uprooted and disconnected from the places they pass through. Their outsider status characterizes their very existence; they are strangers who must constantly negotiate unfamiliar spaces. Father Vaillant even claims that "the saddle is to be my home" in America, a remark that iterates his relentless movement and underscores his alienation (313). The narrative perpetually examines the traveler's dislocation and continually evokes the disconcerting feelings associated with entering strange and unfamiliar places. In *My Antonia*, Cather blurs the lines between the anxiety of travel and the immigrant experience, and understanding her initial response to Europe provides a fresh way to interpret this text. Mr. Shimerda, the most anxious character in the book, grieves (and eventually dies) because he cannot assimilate into American culture. By viewing Mr. Shimerda's suffering as a projection of Cather's anguish in Europe, his experience takes on new meaning. The book emerges as a psychological response to the anxiety of travel, and fiction represents a safe space for revising and reexamining one's journeys.

As Dreiser makes his way from New York to Indiana, he reveals how leisurely movement can serve as a path to understanding personal and national identities. For Dreiser, home is central to his perception of self and nation, and *A Hoosier Holiday* provides an opportunity to explore that concept and its relation to travel. Paul Theroux postulates that a “great unstated reason for travel is to find places that exemplify where one has been happiest. Looking for idealized versions of home—indeed looking for the perfect memory” (*Fresh* 30). Thus, travel can take one to scenes that fulfill a psychological desire to find oneself at “home” again, or to at least create a memory that evokes such feelings. At the same time, travel can represent an attempt to obtain the happiness that eluded one at home. It can make home an entirely different “idealized” place. For Dreiser, the journey back to Indiana provides an opportunity to both recover the happy moments of his youth and diminish the pain associated with the past.

At the same time, Dreiser’s travel narrative represents a departure from his fictional portrayals of home, and understanding how he operates as a traveler provides a path to discovering new themes in his fiction. *Sister Carrie* is understood as the quintessential naturalist text and as Dreiser’s most complete expression of his naturalist viewpoint. Yet, it also foregrounds the home. In examining domestic and national spaces in *Sister Carrie* after studying *A Hoosier Holiday*, one realizes a new way of understanding this classic text. In *Sister Carrie*, the home lacks comfort, joy, and even permanence. The same can be said of *The “Genius.”* But in *A Hoosier Holiday*, it stands as a place of nostalgic memory and family bonding. One’s personal history begins and ends there, and the travel narrative allows Dreiser to re-interpret his vision and imagine the home as an idealized space.

Although Dreiser looks backward through much of his journey, he is forward-looking when considering America as a national space, and his analysis of immigration, technology, and rurality posits a new national portrait. This divided gaze, which simultaneously looks backward and forward, also evidences itself in post-WW I and WWII narratives. Edith Wharton's *Fighting France* and Edmund Wilson's *Europe without Baedeker* exemplify a desire to find traces of the scenes that they knew before the war even as they survey the newly ravaged landscape. As Wharton passes through once-thriving villages, she notes that they "all seemed empty—not figuratively but literally empty" (48). Of Aube, a "pleasant" village that now stands in "ruins," she claims that "one can easily picture" what it "must have been as it looked out, in the blue September weather, above the ripening pears of its gardens to the crops in the valley and the large landscape beyond" (57). Now, she laments, "it is a mere waste of rubble and cinders, not one threshold distinguishable from another" (57-58). The only thing that remains is a "brick heap and some twisted stove-pipes" (58). Such scenes reveal the transformation of both the landscape and Wharton's way of seeing place. Before the war, these villages would have provided a path to the picturesque. The small houses would have been aestheticized into the background. But now, she joyously reports that she hears "the sound of hammers" and sees "bricklayers and masons at work" (94). No longer seeking a way to transcend or simply ignore such banalities, Wharton centers them in her portrait and thus reveals her new way of seeing France. Rather than pursuing empty cathedrals and silent landscapes, she scans the scene for signs of life and recovery.

While Wharton shifts her gaze and uses her travel narrative to uplift the French spirit, Wilson mourns the loss of pre-war London, and his travels indicate a nostalgic

desire to rediscover that world. At first, he channels James and asserts that a “New Yorker” cannot “pretend to himself that his own city is anything other than an unscrupulous real-estate speculation—whereas a capital like London is a place in which people are supposed to live and enjoy some recreation and comfort rather than merely to feed the bank-accounts of landlords” (7). Mimicking the Jamesian disdain for the business world and wistfully searching for a beautiful scene to provide a respite from the war-ravaged city, Wilson strolls through “green parks and open squares” and claims that these spaces “provide a real escape into the country” (7). Such places make it possible to forget that a war has just ended.

But soon after, Wilson walks among London’s statues, and the recently ended conflict becomes an all-too real part of the landscape. When gazing up at statues of England’s great poets and war heroes, he discovers a new type of war memorial, a “mechanical monument which stands out among these human ones as a bleak unassimilable block—a statue to the Royal Artillery in the shape of a huge howitzer gun” (8). The new memorial signals “a definite break in the tradition of human heroism,” and it completely disrupts Wilson’s sentimental way of imagining London (8). While travelers before the war celebrated the ruins of ancient battles and vicariously experienced the past through idealized tourism, Wilson walks among scarred buildings and gazes at the “masklike fronts of bombed-out houses, with their dark eye-sockets and gaping jaws,” which seem corpse-like and reiterate the human loss associated with war (177). Such frightening portraits also suggest that the old city has utterly vanished. There is no possibility of recapturing it again. Both Wharton’s and Wilson’s narratives demonstrate not only how war transforms the tourist’s gaze, but also how the anxiety of

travel shifted after the first conflict began in 1915. While they continue to express apprehensions about the act of looking and while they still struggle with the chasm between the mythological or remembered identity of a place and its reality, literal fears of annihilation supersede such anxieties, and we begin to see exactly how war transformed the American traveler's experience.

Dreiser, Wharton, and Wilson cast nostalgic gazes on new scenes, and Cather identified new sites in an Old World. For each of these travelers, the act of looking generated significant anxiety. When James passed through America in 1904-05, he encountered both new and familiar scenes that distressed and excited him. Discovering that he could not view these spaces as a "picturesque traveler," though he certainly tried, James adjusted his way of looking so that he could control the scene, manage his anxieties, and obtain pleasure through his touristic gaze. Edith Wharton's *In Morocco* provides an opportunity for studying that gaze and for discovering how physical spaces are transformed into tourist sites. When pointing out "two white-draped riders passing single file up the red slope to that ring of tents on the ridge" and claiming that they "have a mysterious and inexplicable importance," Wharton exploits stereotypes of the *other* and exoticizes the pair of riders (10). Her confession that she "follows their progress with eyes that ache with conjecture" demonstrates her desire to assign some deeper meaning to the scene. With her penetrating gaze, Wharton searches for reasons to explain their movement, and she tries to unravel their so-called mystery. Although she acknowledges that their travels are pedestrian, that they are likely only going "from one thatched *douar* to another," she insists that "interminable distances unroll behind them" and that "they

breathe of Timbuctoo and the farthest desert” (10). Such assertions reveal the transformative power of the touristic gaze and indicate how it can make even the most mundane scenes appear extraordinary.

At the same time, that interpretation allows Wharton to control the scene, to authorize her European interpretation of Morocco, and to arrange things so they better fit into her travel aesthetic and world view. Through her descriptions, these typical Moroccans become symbols, not only of their country, but of an entire history and region. She endows them with tremendous emblematic value and imposes her own meanings on these unfamiliar and decidedly un-European scenes. She also claims that “Moroccan crowds are always a feast to the eye” because their “instinct of skilful drapery” and their “sense of color . . . make the humblest assemblage of donkey-men and water-carriers an ever-renewed delight” (162). Wharton often strives to banish, or at least minimize, such banalities from her travel writing, especially in works like *Italian Backgrounds* and *A Motor-Flight through France*. Yet, she emphasizes them in this setting. The difference, she claims, is that in the “Near East,” the “human element increases instead of diminishing the delight of the eye” (161). Such remarks reduce the Moroccans to visual souvenirs of an exotic journey. Wharton thus re-presents the scene, not in terms of its reality, but as a visual pleasure. Furthermore, as objects of her touristic gaze, the Moroccans are effectively silenced. They do not speak for themselves or to Wharton. They move silently from one place to another and color what is now Wharton’s world.

Elizabeth Bishop, in *Questions of Travel*, whisks the reader off to Brazil, another exotic world that invites this same type of gaze. Bishop’s volume interrogates the very

act of touring, explores the traveler's gaze, attempts to interpret foreign spaces, and reveals the anxiety and alienation that travel evokes. In "Arrival at Santos," Bishop enters the country and, without any real interest at all, she describes the scene:

Here is a coast; here is a harbor;
here, after a meager diet of horizon, is some scenery:
impractically shaped and—who knows?—self-pitying mountains,
sad and harsh beneath their frivolous greenery,
with a little church on top of one. . . . (3)

Bishop's opening poem exposes the shallowness of tourism and reveals the traveler's assumption that this space serves no other purpose than to provide a pretty setting for her arrival. Upon seeing the flag, she seems surprised to learn that there even *is* a flag here: "So that's the flag," she states, "I never saw it before./I somehow never thought of there *being* a flag" (3). Such remarks not only indicate the tourist's ignorance, but also reveal the psychological place where the touristic gaze originates. As the speaker enters, she dominates the scene with her condescending gaze and denies even the possibility that Santos has culture and history and an identity of its own. Instead, she wonders if "this is how this country is going to answer" her request for new scenes and "a better life, and complete comprehension" of this new space, though she has already proven that her idea of "comprehension" is based on surface features (3). Through this harsh critique, Bishop reveals the traveler's expectations and suggests why touristic spaces can become anxious. Interpreting the landscape as "self-pitying" and "frivolous," the traveler rejects a deeper relation to Santos and immediately distances herself from it.

In “Brazil, January 1, 1502,” Bishop explores the area’s lush landscape, and though she intently peers at this world, she nonetheless relies upon her Western experience to comprehend the scene. She records the “big leaves, little leaves, and giant leaves” of every color, and examines the “occasional lighter veins and edges” of leaves (5). The scene is nature itself, yet she interprets it as a portrait, as something “just finished/and taken off the frame” (5). Then, in an attempt to bring meaning and history to the space, she claims that “in the foreground there is Sin” (6). She imagines the “Christians” who walked through these areas long ago (6) and claims that, “Nature greets our eyes/exactly as she must have greeted theirs” (5). By relying on historical facts to comprehend this locality, the speaker reinscribes a conventional way of touring. She does acknowledge a past-present continuum and she attempts to begin a relationship with the space, but she assumes that there is no other relation that she can have with this landscape. She refuses to let it simply be nature—even the birds are “symbolic” here—and she cannot imagine anything other than a colonialist history (5). By returning to a way of touring that requires a space to be historically significant and by denying Brazil’s identity as anything other than an object of oppression, Bishop rejects an opportunity to experience a new type of travel and reveals the difficulty of disassociating oneself from a gaze that seeks to control and dominate.

And even at the end of her Brazilian tour, Bishop’s relation to the country has changed little. She continues to struggle with her place in this society, and Bishop reaffirms the notion that the tourist is necessarily unable to truly enter into these spaces. They are relegated to gazing and peering in from the margins. In “The Burglar of Babylon,” as she recounts the story of man named Micuçu, Bishop conveys the threat

posed by “the poor who come to Rio/And can’t go home again” (44). The poem indicates the dangers presented by outsiders, and the poems throughout the volume reveal how misinterpretation damages the identity of a place and further alienates the traveler. The ending of this poem recalls the opening poem, “Arrival at Santos.” As she gazes around, the speaker points out a variety of scenes:

There’s the hill of Kerosene,
And the hill of the Skeleton,
The hill of Astonishment,
And the hill of Babylon. (44)

Yet, these are not real sites, only symbols of the anxiety and loss associated with this space. For Bishop, the journey has ended in utter alienation and even fear that she may never be able to get back “home again” after this tour, a remark that points to the difficulty of recovering her sense of “I” after passing through this fraught space. In “Questions of Travel,” she decides that “it would have been a pity/not to have seen the trees along this road” or to have missed hearing “the other, less primitive music of the fat brown bird/who sings above the broken gasoline pump/in a bamboo church of Jesuit baroque” (9). Yet her repeated (and failed) attempts to interpret and fit into this space suggest something different.

Touring is almost always an “immodest demand for a different world” (Bishop 3). While Bishop’s comment refers to the intent to escape one’s workaday world, the travelers in this study often reveal a desire to change the world being gazed at. For Wharton, and James too, European travel typically provides an opportunity to engage

history and pursue “picturesque beauty.” When Wharton encountered “traditional life” in France before the war, she subordinated it to the closest picturesque scene. In *A Motor-Flight through France*, she writes about crossing through communities with “low house-fronts” and “barred gates” and catching glimpses of “clean bare courts” and “calm yet quick faces in the doorways” (76). In her tribute to the “dullness” of the “French face,” Wharton asserts that, “as a mere piece of workmanship, of finish, the French provincial face—the peasant’s face, even—often has the same kind of interest as a work of art” (*Motor-Flight* 77). Scenes of everyday life and the “faces” of the peasantry serve as stark reminders of a world that Wharton would rather ignore. She did not come here to see these things. While passing through the Seine region, she even claims that the working French “pursued their business with that cheerful activity which proceeds from an intelligent acceptance of given conditions” (28). According to Wharton, they demonstrate an “admirable *fitting into the pattern*” (29). Such comments alleviate her anxieties, and her forceful way of putting these individuals in their place—and suggesting that they cheerfully accept her order of things—demonstrates how travel and the touristic gaze can be used to reimagine and restructure the world.

For many Americans, though, the living culture is of greater interest, and their travel narratives often foreground the things that the pre-war Wharton and the younger James want to ignore or simply aestheticize. Though the masters often write about continuity and adventures against lesser-known backgrounds, their texts consistently reveal an unwillingness to explore such spaces. But when travelers forthrightly narrate their journeys, they unmask not only their anxieties, but also the pleasures associated with stepping firmly into a truly uncanny and unfamiliar space, wherever that may be.

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