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Reflections on Social Engineering and Settler-American Literature

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- 1 The publication and dissemination of literature (and, tangentially, the study of literature) within boundaries of a national identity invariably focuses public attention on the opinions of a small number of authors, publishers, reviewers, and critics. These sociocultural projections of a uniform (and for that reason illusory) United States national identity, national literature, and associated parallels of cultural collectivity—for a populace of over 300 million—is a circumstance that deserves focus: what makes a piece of writing “American?” What characteristics, themes, and structures define the canonical texts? Moreover, as many literary expressions do not fit a prescribed national mold, further polemic arises when we analyze the forces that minoritize “other” literatures. The axis of these uncertainties relates to who conceives and controls the metaphoric maps that define the group-identity. To engage this topic, this inquiry examines the multilateral influences on the formation of collective identity through attention to governmental social engineering; the aim here is first to characterize the structures that place a contrived primordialism in the image of the settler-American, and second, to explore the attendant literary and cultural expressions of this phenomenon.
- 2 While many scholars have examined the composition of national groups—Homi Bhabha, Benedict Anderson, and Clifford Geertz, among others¹—this body of criticism tends to employ macroscopic frameworks that examine broad shifts in social grouping from the perspective of entire communities. What is missing from the dialog is discussion of collective-sentiment dissemination from the perspective of an individual. In a day-to-day, practical sense, what makes a single person believe in or identify with a collectivity? What are moderating factors (age at exposure to myth, monolingual education and public expression, movements from place to place) that might shape such circumstances? This initial framework will examine the makeup of a national group itself from these perspectives to establish a detailed context of inquiry. I will follow this foundation with a discussion of the traditional sociohistoric organization of

the United States (that is, residents of the space—not necessarily citizens of the political region) and its attendant influence on both communal identity and appropriation of rights. These cultural conditions, often set in place by umbrella governing offices, are central to consider when examining the cultural proprietorship of the space itself and its use in collective-identity imaging that hegemonic models use to define residents of that space.

- 3 It seems an objective of controlled cultural projections (in language, visual images, founding narratives) together with strict legislative regulations of these canons, is to isolate residents within constructed spheres of symbols. The limitations inherent to such frameworks, in turn, function to produce specific behavioral expectations upon the people isolated within them. The broader intended outcome of these interventions, we might perceive as a common recognition of “possession” of the land itself (on behalf of those organizations publishing the representations). Secondly, these structures imply the concept that there are appropriate languages, creeds, and cultural ceremony to be used by communities residing in the geographic region. This series of constructions enhances the status of some projections while minoritizing those that do not fit this prescribed shape, often relegating them to hyphenated status.² The settler-American author, in this sense, might be understood as a man or woman that has been isolated within these “American” canons, believes in them, and thus culturally applies them as an artistic device, which thus slightly reshapes the constructs in the process.
- 4 **1. Construction of National Credence: Myth-Making, Canonic Isolation, Adolescence**

“You had this fake ideal planted in you and then
you lived your life to it.”

—Ernest Hemingway, “On Writing,” *The Nick Adams Stories*.

- 5 The discussion of national construction indeed spills over into various fields: restrictive linguistic, cartographical, psychological, and cultural (among other) measures, converge to form a collective social model—a metaphoric image of a group member. As a nationality is learned, a “national,” then, in a personal sense, might be understood firstly as a product of his or her surroundings. To begin, we might focus on practices that coerce those who are strangers to one another into a community through triangulated cultural directives. While political citizenship is formal and aversive in its rigidity, cultural citizenship is sometimes constructed through similar mechanisms. “Look at what the institutions are trying to do,” remarks Noam Chomsky (2:17:25 *Noam Chomsky and the Media*). According to his model, national governments use a series of emotionally potent stories and symbols as a paradigm, a framework which sets an agenda of behavior to which citizens should adhere. The structures that determine, shape, control, and culturally restrict, in order to forge an image of a member of the collective, are often built through public media.³
- 6 A person’s sentiment of collective identity tends to take shape during childhood and adolescence both in the home-space and through contact with public spheres. During this crucial period of life, when we do not control our environment (and lack appropriate cognitive faculty to fully understand our surroundings), a person is presented a system of cultural symbols that are offered in such a way that they *seem* constant and perennial. The collective system of indicators creates an imaginary community of people who believe they share, among other things, experiences, beliefs,

customs, histories, and sometimes ethnicity, religion, and language. As Benedict Anderson explains, modern collective-identity is necessarily a fantasy, as “members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them” (7). Nevertheless the concept is exceptionally powerful: David Noble notes that in addition to the imagined communal self-definition, nationalists tend to believe “that their culture was created by nature” (xxiv). The nation-state itself, however, as Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller observe “is premised on the idea of cultural as well as political unity. In many countries, ethnic homogeneity defined in terms of common language, culture, traditions and history, has been the basis of the nation-state. This unity has often been fictitious—a construction of the ruling elite” (15).

- 7 Isolation within socially-engineered spaces during childhood and adolescence, then, is significantly determinative of one’s belief in and identification with national myths in adulthood. More specifically, some socially-engineered arenas include classrooms, sporting arenas, museums, mosques/churches/synagogues, war memorials, holidays, books and media outlets; these constructions define a model of social order. The arrangements of symbols and frameworks, which over generations becomes accepted (and even familial) traditions, combined with an immobile populace lacking communication from extra-systemic sources, have been effective instruments in controlling resources of a territory and creating collective identity.⁴ Michael Brearley and Andrea Sabbadini’s article “The Truman Show: How’s it Going to End?” in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* demonstrates the implications of isolating a youth within a prescribed space. They note that Truman Burbank’s situation “is prototypically adolescent” as he believes in the reality with which he is presented because he “has no other choice” (434). The moment of epiphany occurs when Burbank breaks from the symbols to become a *True-man*:

The film may be taken to show how our whole orientation, belief-systems, and life are controlled, limited, and made risible or pathetic by a systematic religious/political mentality of power. The ordinary citizen has had his subjectivity warped and falsified by prevailing powerful unconscious attitudes which reside, among other places, in the media. (Brearley and Sabbadini 437)

- 8 Brearley and Sabbadini make clear that Burbank’s circumstance mirrors the prescriptions of life in a modernity inundated with symbols and myths presented as facts. Contemporary American society might be more exclusionary than Seahaven, as those that have introduced “other” ideas of value in the form of political, religious, or scientific thought; gender, sexual or racial roles; or a transformation of economic or social hierarchy, have been systematically marginalized through propaganda, mockery, incarceration or deportation—if not assassination.⁵
- 9 Thus, in the print-capitalist period, the political construction of a “nation” may be understood as a narrative of constructed symbols projected in a fashion intended to develop specific behaviors in a mass population. As these hegemonic canons of value are often realized through state-controlled arenas,⁶ they reduce to a series of often binary behavioral expectations of each individual: a person’s adherence to and observance of these spheres produces the perception of collective belonging, i.e., “patriotism” according to the external social perspective. Chomsky has also pointed out that linguistic self-definition, which is to say the formation of a mother tongue, has close ties to identity, and the crucial physiological linguistic developmental process occurs during puberty. Thus, while there are exceptions, our language is stamped upon

us, so to speak, as is our collective identity during a few short years of life (interview with the author). As a result, exposure to institutional definitions of nationality during one's youth is a crucial component of a person's identification with the umbrella social structures throughout adulthood.

- 10 It is important to note that while the definitions reduce to and are manipulated into rigid categories like "national" and "foreigner," these terms fall short, as the concept of such groups itself is invented. Individuals are not communally restrictive per parameters of the national prescription—although we are inundated with propaganda indicating that they are. Before exposure to the regulatory labels of "nationality"/collectivity through the multiple linguistic, cultural, political and educational constructs, people from distinct geographic regions and/or linguistic, economic, and social backgrounds do not differentiate between "other" and "us." The differentiation is not an organic component of humanity but a construct; playgrounds in plural neighborhoods evidence this. In consequence, because collective identities are mutually exclusive, they neglect to *describe* the predisposition of humans to fraternize with whomever we happen to cohabitate—regardless of religion, language, race, and the other paradigms of identity. Instead the collectivity *prescribes* specific norms, controlled through canons of communication.⁷
- 11 It is important to note that nations cannot exist beyond the scope and reach of those who control, promulgate, and exist within the isolated spaces of the myths—myths almost always communicated through language of the dominant group. Linguistic control of print-capitalist structures, then, plays a vital role in framing the behavior of the populace. A demonstrative example of language and sociocultural control is Eugen Weber's study, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (1976). This scholar observes that illiterate agrarian communities throughout geographic "France"—but outside linguistic controls of state schooling—did not perceive the umbrella concept of *Le France* as late as World War I. "Every little valley," notes a traveler in that period, "is still a little world that differs from the neighboring world as Mercury does from Uranus. Every village is a clan, a sort of state with its own patriotism" (qtd in Weber 47).
- 12 The illiteracy of the peasants is important to consider in when examining their feelings of collective identity: while reading, writing, and schooling in general tend to be considered liberating, one might re-question these notions, as many of these non-French-speaking peasants⁸ would have had misery and death awaiting them in the trenches of the Great War had they been "liberated" into "Frenchmen" through literacy and formal education. As Weber deftly observes, the "illiterate are not in fact inarticulate" (xiv), and they voiced repulsion for external governance by disregarding taxes and performing bodily dismemberment (often cutting off trigger fingers) to avoid military service (106). In France, the United States, and throughout the print-capitalist world, formal education and proficiency in metropolitan languages means colonization, subordination to myths, and shifting resources (in the form of monies, agrarian and other commodities, as well as people—in military conscriptions) from one local community to another that is distant and without authority, apart from the power of myth, to seize these supplies.⁹
- 13 At their best nations offer the guise of fraternity and protection through ostensible group-membership. At their worst, they destroy human empathy through narratives of fear and persuasion to act not on compassion for others but in the interests of non-

local resource managers.¹⁰ While powerful forces, collective identities are also ephemeral. Once they expire, societies swiftly disregard predecessors from whence their populace descended. In the West, we study but do not celebrate the end of the Punic Wars. The Carthaganean, Ancient Greek and Egyptian societies are so distant from present consciousness that contents of the leaders' tombs are showpieces of museums. Later cadavers though, like that of Columbus, Bonaparte and Washington are revered, memorialized, and left to decompose in their internment vaults as they are active parts of national myths. Once these fantasies expire, contents of those tombs might also become historical and translated to museums.

14 **2. Social Manipulation of Space : Constructing Settler-American Cultural Identity.**

“Which culture is that? Boston? New York? Savannah? New Orleans? Denver? Los Angeles? I grew up on the Mexican border (on the Texas side). My culture was eating tacos and enchiladas, listening to both Mexican and American music, and speaking Tex-Mex (a combination of English and Spanish).”

Jacob Hornberger, “Immigration should not be Restricted.”

15 In popular culture and historical documents America tends to be portrayed as a settler society. This collective identity was built on a historiographic framework presenting the myths of primordial settlers as fact; a process which defines rights for certain peoples and expels, ignores, or otherwise eliminates others. (“Others” might not recognize settler-American fictions and affiliated political claims in spite of residing in the same geographic area prior to, during, or after the manipulation of the space into the “United States.”) The transition that settlers realized from “foreigner” to “indigenous” status in America was a governmental effort buttressed by both democratic initiatives and cultural projections. Before discussing the literary outcomes of this process, we might first historicize the political developments of the diverse communities within the American continental space, as they relate to governance, control, rights, and self-determination of the (non)controlling population demographics; this development, as I will discuss, relates closely to the imaging and imagining of the settler-American cultural canon.

16 When the political entity of “The United States” came into being, for most residents of the continental space it was a shift of colonial control—from London to Philadelphia (then Washington). As the new governmental body made expansionist claims to what are now Florida, Texas and the Midwest, later west to the Pacific, these regions were already inhabited by people with *other* collective identities. Many born in these conquered and annexed lands were not displaced, which is to say, they remained to live under the new imperial government from Washington. A gradient of this circumstance took place for Spaniards in northern Florida; Frenchmen in St. Louis, New Orleans and throughout Illinois; Spaniards and Mexicans in the western territories. The same social strata that carried out imperial expansions also waged two forced migrations: Africans in the slave trade;¹¹ and Native Americans, often relocated by military or other force.¹² Moreover, immigrants from other parts of the world arrived to populate the new annexations, territories, and states. This delicate conglomerate of already-present collective identities inhabiting the same space created a particularly complex task for

the imperial government: invention of unity across a diverse population. The Roman Empire, faced with a similar task, used military presence together with a systematic spread of language, technology, visual symbols, and religion to transform Imperial provinces to Senatorial status—in short, to convert the dissimilar collective identities of the conquered into Roman citizenries.¹³ While the United States government had a different challenge (as many new “Americans” were immigrants, not conquered peoples) as this examination will underscore, United States as a sociopolitical body has employed parallel mechanisms to enact cultural transformations of the populace, including until late in the nineteenth century, labeling itself an “imperial” presence in the Americas.¹⁴ The territorial conquests and associated implementation of social mechanisms generally had three phases:

- 17 1) Merchants (explorers) encountered and claimed resources on behalf of the metropolitan.
- 18 2) Metropolitan martial occupation and implementation of “Fort”-cities (Dodge, Lauderdale, Worth, Collins, and so on).¹⁵
- 19 3) Once under military control, legislators offered free land and protection in exchange for settlement by metropolitan citizens. Once settler-colonists held a majority in a region, democratic elections integrated territories as political memberstates.
- 20 In this way, erasure of indigenous cultures in the United States has been carried out under the guises of democratic justification, allowing the enterprise to appear organic.
¹⁶ As soon as military occupations took place,¹⁷ the federal government began active promotion of metropolitan collective identity through social devices such as citizenship, compulsory language, holidays and monuments promoting founding myths, and endorsement of certain sports and religious observances. Emphasis on settler social structures has been carried out in part through compulsory public schooling. This engineering of the population to believe in or identify with certain cultural markers is a central component of governmental and political power. The unity and confidence promoted through these shared rituals strengthens the idea of the collectivity, which is to say the idea of the “nation,” which in turn greatly facilitates executive authority in arenas like control of capital and tax collection, sometimes war conscriptions and military invasions.
- 21 During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Midwest and West (prior to becoming “states”) were being populated by migrants from the metropolitan, mainly of European descent, that were often in search of land from the Homestead Act (1862). This legislation offered free tracts in exchange for settlement and was accompanied by a robust propaganda campaign, one that used state means, such as postage stamps, national hymns and seals, to contrive the image of an “American.” As Donald Pease remarks, “how the state’s management of its territorial borders played a foundational role in how the nation imagines itself and in how the state legitimates the techniques of coercion and discipline that engender a normalized sense of national identity” (179). In these cases an “American” was manifestly forged in the likeness of a usually English-speaking, Christian settler whose dominion reached “from sea to shining sea.” This persona was presented as a primordial part of the geographic, social, and cultural landscape in order to establish sociocultural and governmental proprietorship of the region.¹⁸ To be sure, these affairs as to which residents of the same space were considered politically “American” until the middle of the twentieth century were drawn along racial and religious lines.¹⁹

- 22 In this way, the political prescriptions of proprietorship and jurisdiction carry significant cultural weight, in particular for immigrants. Theodore Roosevelt's 1919 letter to the American Defense Society asserts that it is "an outrage to discriminate against any [immigrant] because of creed, birthplace, or origin. But this is predicated upon the man's becoming in very fact *an American*" (qtd. in Dobbs 209). Roosevelt goes on to proclaim transformation to "American"-status involves speaking English, asserting that each newcomer should learn the language in five years or be deported (Ingraham 44).²⁰ Though such political posturing might be untenable today, linguistic manipulation has been a *de facto* requisite for civic membership, as since "United States" inception as a political entity, the citizenship exam has been offered only in English.²¹ Demographically, moreover, many regions currently subject to American citizenship policies are in fact *not English speaking*. Puerto Rico has higher population than 24 US states, and 96% of islanders are native speakers of Spanish and 70% have very little or no knowledge of English. Notwithstanding, immigrants to Puerto Rico must complete the US citizenship exam in English ("Language Use and English-Speaking Ability: 2000." *Census 2000 Brief*).
- 23 Language has also been a principal mechanism for implementation of settler control, even in regions already integrated into the metropolitan as "states." These governmental interventions in favor of settler language are particularly complicated in Texas and the Southwest, places where English-speakers are historical newcomers. The region in question had been claimed politically by Spain and Mexico for almost 350 years before US annexation; Native Americans have resided there for several millennia. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), which annexed the territory from Mexico, was signed by Santa Ana while US military occupied both Mexico City and the town of Guadalupe Hidalgo.²² Because the treaty was signed under duress and drafted far from the region itself, with little or no input from residents of the divisive region, many understand subsequent US colonization of the Southwest as an illegitimate enterprise, not unlike what some consider "illegal" immigration to border states today (See: Brown 200-244).
- 24 Since the Guadalupe Hidalgo seizure, colonists (and later, US citizens) implemented their language, political systems, holidays and sports, and created the image of a Southwestern citizen in the likeness of a settler. The "Great Seal" of Arizona, for instance, has George Warren, a man from Massachusetts, holding a shovel and pickaxe; the "territory seal" is Warren with a hoe. In spite of metropolitan colonization and repeated legislative attempts to implement English, nonetheless, the results have been mixed. As recently as 1911 fewer than 10% of New Mexicans could speak English; today 43% of residents (excluding undocumented members of the community) prefer English (Chisholm 523). In "Crossing National and Creating Cultural Borders," Thomas Weaver points out that prior to becoming a state in 1912, Arizona's political affiliation with the US was delayed due to "the high 'Mexican population,' which was considered not capable of citizenship" (46). Indeed, once the settlers held a majority, statehood was conferred.
- 25 Moreover, salient members of non-controlling demographics in the United States have at times adhered to the prescribed articulations of settler-belonging, a phenomenon that has, according to Gregory Rodríguez, augmented the dimensions of settler-control. As this scholar has pointed out, "culture can trump mere demography" (1). The settler-power culture is not limited to those of European or settler descent, and thusly has

attracted emulation or mimicry of newcomers who “could aspire and acculturate to the...norm and ideal—by gaining entrance to their schools primarily, but also by joining their churches, appreciating their art forms and imbibing their ideas, adopting their aesthetic” (1). Rodríguez asserts that the Ivy League schools represent the upper-most authority of these concepts, and that “Ivy League law schools [have] complete hegemony over the Supreme Court. That only proves the point” (1). The settler culture remains in the seats of influence, anointing power and prescribing norms. Those of non-traditional settler-demographics may only be expected, one might argue, to prescribe these norms from their systems of belief—beliefs constructed during formative years, spent partially in ivy-league hallways of settler-norm dominion.

- 26 Nevertheless, in general the repressed demographics do not have a record of silent compliance with settler norms. The oppression of Native Americans has been exceedingly severe, as is summarized in a 1991 letter to the president of the United States:

Dear President Bush. Please send us your assistance in freeing our small nation from occupation. This foreign force occupied our lands to steal our rich resources. They used biological warfare and deceit, killing thousands of elders, children and women in the process. As they overwhelmed our land, they deposed our leaders and people of our own government, and in its place, they installed governments systems that today control our daily lives in many ways. As in your own words, the occupation and overthrow of one small nation [...] is too many. Sincerely, An American Indian. (qtd in Zinn 627)

- 27 This plea is not unique; in December 2007, the Republic of Lakota²³ declared independence (reassertion of sovereignty) from the United States, citing that: “the U.S. has denied all Native people their International Treaty rights, Treaty lands and basic human rights of freedom and sovereignty” (*Declaration of Continued Independence*). Gary Garrison, of the State Department’s Bureau of Indian Affairs, said the Lakota announcement “doesn’t mean anything” and that the group might “end up like all the other groups that have declared themselves independent—usually getting arrested and being put in jail” (qtd. in Daly 1). The settler-idea of the United States has been developed and iterated through the social systems I have thus far mentioned, especially at the governmental level, resulting in these binary notions of communal rights. Garrison’s perception and assertions of settler-dominance of the space is demonstrative of contemporary social currents taught in the classrooms, noted in the textbooks, and reiterated at a colloquial level throughout much, though not all, of the geographic region. While it is true public schooling, monuments, and other governmental imaging are not devoid of Native American themes,²⁴ expulsion and eradication are portrayed as sentimental and nostalgic national rites of passage, firmly planted in the providential rights of settlers—a myth reiterated through cultural, political, and economic spheres.²⁵ While Massachusetts itself and many of its townships bear Native American names, the descendents of the pre-Columbian Wampanoag and Nauset who populated the region the previous millennia have been marginalized in the last few centuries—more are in poverty than the rest of the population—and since European invasions these tribes have been denied rights of construction and economic stimulation by the Massachusetts government, a body which has never had a Native American representative (“Two Cape Cod Series”; Viser “Casino no Done Deal” 1-3). Centuries of land-seizure and codification of rights, laws, and cultural principles in the interest of colonizers has resulted in Europeans (who had no entry visas from the Algonquian) colonized, attempted to control and expel the earlier civilization, and

invented a settler-identity—and now their descendents claim perpetual rights to the land itself and to govern the societies that live in them.

- 28 Settler-Americans, thus, are often considered indigenous to any region of the continent, responsible to none for invasion, conquest, or cultural cleansing. This reductive historical track is presented as linear, infallible, and, importantly, over. As Ali Behad has noted, essential to the continued domination of settler interests is “not the recollection of the past but its excision, in order to invent an alternative future,” a process this critic describes as “emancipatory politics of memory” (Behad in Pease 190). A crucial part of this task has been and is the idealization of settler fictions through selective cultural transmission and discriminating collective remembrance. This process strives to erase settler responsibility and possibility of reparation (regardless of the measurable sums that present generations enjoy from their forbearers’ crimes),²⁶ replacing them with nostalgic tributes. Notably, Noam Chomsky has remarked that “Our system isolates...it’s very difficult to have ideas.”²⁷ Aesthetically, then, we might maintain that the literature and visual art created by a populace within this isolation might strive to communicate the themes enunciated through the lens of settler-control.

29 3. Settler-American Literature

“What makes authors think what they think,
write what they write, perceive the world as they
do?”

Taras Olekysk, University of Puerto Rico

- 30 The idea of settler-American national identity has also been forged in part through dissemination of certain cultural projections that ostensibly describe or communicate a consensus feeling, spirit, or inner essence of the population. An inner dilemma with the notion of “American Literature” is the reliance on settler concepts of collective identity. These constructs might be revaluated, as they often take the form of prescriptions from the few with canonic control. While transculturation from African, Native American, Latino and Hispanic, and other sources has enriched pan-American civilizations, from the onset of the political state, the dominant literary personification in the United States canon is that of a—usually English-speaking European—settler, a reality which belies the demographics of the populace (Burt 281-7; Skipp i-iv). It is also clear that mimicry of the settler myths drives much of this strand of writing, as the associated images of Europeans and other “pioneers” on the American continent in these texts have both framed canon and influenced the products of subsequent authors’ imaginations. In these texts we find certain European languages, religions, and sociocultural norms, and literary uses of (usually English) language and (usually westward) movement as common creative devices.
- 31 In *The Role of Place in Literature* (1984), Leonard Lutwack argues that place has a different function in American writing than in other literatures, as the physical space is often perceived as an opportunity for industry and the spread of sociopolitical control. These settler-Americans do not “feel much attachment to the land they live in” (178), a concept which is manifest in their national literature. The physical territory itself and our mental associations of the place change over time, and because of this phenomenon, the collective conception of a region can change drastically within a short period, and several narratives from the (European and non-European settler) American literary canon demonstrate the unique relationship. Rip Van Winkle, for

example, awakens after a mere twenty-year absence and the new landscape shocks him. The Catskills did not change physically, but his friends left the village, his wife (symbolic of country) is dead, and his loyalty to George III is out of date. This character's rude awakening demonstrates that land and even community are not sacred, nor are they permanent in America except to the Native Americans, whose civilizations are ignored or misunderstood by the colonizing society.²⁸ This transformation of cultural proprietorship of the space itself is a clear model in James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*, where the American land shifts from "wilderness" to "civilization." The titles of the novels, when viewed chronologically, illustrate the change of the territory from wilds (Native American cultural control) to cultivation (settler-dominion). The year or period in which each novel takes place marks the stages of settler "development" of the American continent from wilderness (*The Deerslayer*, 1744) to the expulsion of the Native Americans (*The Last of the Mohicans*, 1757), to trailblazing individual exploration (*The Pathfinder*, the 1750s), plural settlement (*The Pioneers*, 1793) and finally domesticity and a controlled environment (*The Prairie*, 1804) where Judge Temple arrests Leatherstocking for killing a deer, an episode exhibiting "progress" in the formerly rugged frontier. "When an American says that he loves his country," asserts Adalai Stevenson, "he means not only that he love (sic) the New England hills [...] prairies, mountains [...] sea. He means that he loves inner air, an inner light in which freedom lives and in which a man can draw the breath of self-respect" (qtd. in Lutwack 178). America, in this example, is not a place but propaganda of personal autonomy and independence, and the national myths themselves belong to a narrative of expansion, change and transformation—in reality, control—of the land itself as well as the people who originally inhabited it.²⁹ In short, as Lutwack points out, Americans are "always an ideal standing high and free above the details of place" (177)—a concept that has justified governmental removal of peoples from their sacred lands, numerous wars, and exploitation of the environment for economic gains.

- 32 Together with transformation and imperialism, movement—to the west, especially—through regions politically controlled by the United States is also a foundational component of the settler-"American Experience" when portrayed through literature. Starting with migration to the continent, followed by westward movement across it, the settler-literature of the United States imagines the space as the perennial native realm of the settlers, often without clarification of the cultural appropriation of the area. The settler-characters presume rights of presence, action, and (in their terms) "development" of the space, thus such texts function to artistically underscore the construct of "indigenous" status that settler-Americans assert around the continent. The characters in Mark Twain, Jack Kerouac, and Cormac McCarthy among many others, use the motion west (and sometimes east) of settler-American protagonists as a principal means to develop character.³⁰ The cultural annexation of space demonstrated by movement through it allows the authors to imagine the space as a static, undifferentiated space. Thus the settler-Americans may exist as permanent characteristics of the landscape, and their presence is accordingly an element of the evolving process of cultural appropriation.
- 33 Jonathan Arac's essay, "Nationalism, Hypercanonization, and *Huckleberry Finn*," notes how we might read Twain's famous novelistic effort as an artistic achievement in the nationalist mode. This critic observes how "the emergence of nationality and the emergence of literature" (17) interrelate, and canonical texts such as *Finn* involve

saturation of the national allegories of movement through symbolic spaces and the “civilization” of them through control—characteristics which define both nation and national literary canon. In 1839, approximately when the narrative takes place, the use of new “American” English slang contributes to the nationally defining subtext—as does Huck’s robbery from the men whose con-scheme involves pretending to be an English king. And Huck’s final desire to flee west into Indian Territory—presumably to control it under the settler whim—reiterates myths of colonizers’ “rights” with attendant allusions to the farces of social Darwinism. One might read Pap and the widow as colonial masters and the Jim and Huck as the odd newly-postcolonial couple, insuring that their former masters do not steal their fortune. The two cohabitate for a time on the river that was Delaware and Iowa trading routes for thousands of years before settler incursions; Jim’s recapture and Huck’s ultimate movement west establish their social positions, placing the novel firmly within the fictions settler-American identity. These themes are of particular importance for later American writing, as Ernest Hemingway notes in *Green Hills of Africa*, “All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*” (22).

- 34 In Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* (1957), protagonist Sal Paradise is a settler-American of Italian descent. The text is a thinly-veiled autobiography, yet Kerouac was son of working-class immigrants from Quebec. “Feeling himself on the margins of society,” asserts Ann Charters, “Kerouac stripped himself of his French-Canadian ancestry [if we read *On the Road* as autobiographical] to make himself more American” (qtd. in Kerouac xxi). For this critic, the novel itself is “the story of his own search for a place as an outsider in America” (qtd. in Kerouac xx). This text, then, might be read as an exercise in cultural mimicry, in particular if we focus on Kerouac’s use of language. The author learned English at age 6, and in this other works, Kerouac employed a literary technique that he called “spontaneous prose.” This writing practice involves “the infantile pileup of scatological buildup words till satisfaction is gained” (Kerouac qtd. in Ramazani 251). This overuse of language saturates and elongates clauses, thus hyper-identifying Kerouac with the sociocultural underpinnings of the other—in this case, settler-American—language structure. Charters also remarks that Paradise strives for the “American dream by trying to pin down its promise of unlimited freedom” (qtd. in Kerouac xxi). This freedom is embodied precisely by exercising an effervescent writing technique, but it is also displayed through unbounded character-movement from place to place within the United States (and in the concluding stages of the journey, Mexico). The constant motion and glorification of these constructs of settler-America indeed drives the novel, and we might understand the “Americanization” of Kerouac, achieved through Paradise, as a multimodal process; publishing the work in the settler-language (English)—and a garrulous use of it—together with the exaggeration of a settler-custom (movement west) are chief concerns. The latter, according to Paradise, is embodied by “the road—the soul of the Beatific” (*On the Road* 161). Thus the mechanism which grants Paradise/Kerouac entry into the social group—the roadway—becomes an aesthetic delight. Coming to terms with Kerouac’s personal dimensions of immigrant-status through exaggeration of settler-American rituals is indeed a captivating characteristic of this novel, one that has raised the standing of the work to a near canonical position in settler-American literature.
- 35 Cormac McCarthy’s *Border Trilogy* (comprised of *All the Pretty Horse*, 1992; *The Crossing*, 1994; and *Cities of the Plain*, 1998), adds dimension and freshness to the settler-American canon, and in several ways, the texts question the composition of such frameworks as

literary and cultural instruments. Like *Finn* and *On the Road*, the English language and movement west are inherent, though sometimes unmentioned, concepts in the span of the three novels. Bilingualism is suddenly introduced as a settler-American characteristic,³¹ one that in a sense belies the former projections of the cultural hierarchy. While Finn notes the presence of a new “American” language and Kerouac inundates *The Road* with that tongue, two of McCarthy’s main settler-American protagonists in *The Border Trilogy*, John Grady Cole and Billy Parham, speak Spanish arguably as well as they do English. In spite of this intercultural quality that linguistically binds the two men to nearby Mexico, after traveling and also living for extended periods south of the political border, in all three texts both characters eventually return to the United States. In *All the Pretty Horses* Cole does so on Thanksgiving Day; *The Crossing* ends after Parham returns from Mexico with his brother’s remains to bury them in New Mexico; and in *The Crossing*, after Cole dies in Mexico,³² Parham returns to live permanently in Arizona. The Southwestern settings in the novel also engage with characteristic movements to the west, when we view them in chronological order. The American episodes in *All the Pretty Horses* occur in San Angelo, Texas and to the south; those in *The Crossing* take place in New Mexico near El Paso; and the scenes of *Cities of the Plain* are realized in Alamogordo, New Mexico, and later, the epilogue of the three novels, in *Cities of the Plain*, has the most westerly episode of the trilogy;³³ Parham finds himself under an overpass “somewhere in central Arizona” where “east-west traffic passed overhead” (265).

- 36 McCarthy also plays with the settler-American identity constructs through his use of “blood.” After being injured in a Mexican prison, Lacey Rawlins, an Anglo-Texan friend of protagonist Cole, receives a blood transfusion from a Mexican donor. The monolingual (in English) Rawlins worries that this operation might have made him “part Mexican” (177). Spanish-speaking John Grady Cole, who spent part of his youth under tutelage not of his mother but a Mexican family, responds “it dont mean nothin” (177). McCarthy’s three texts challenge the paradigms of settler-character through linguistic, cultural, and in this case, biological salvos, and indeed, we might better categorize the trilogy as a trans or postnational body of texts instead of alongside *Fin* and *On the Road*, firmly planted in the canons of settler-American writing.
- 37 Such cultural characteristics also transcend literary imaging. Settler-movement to California, for instance, has been a prolific theme in American television and film—it might be understood as a genre in itself. In television, for example, *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *Beverly Hills 90210*, *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, *The Real World: San Francisco*, and *Going to California* each focus on US-born people from other states moving to California, and many films, such as *The Godfather* (1972), *Scarface* (1983), *The Karate Kid* (1984), *La Bamba* (1987), *Far and Away* (1992), *Men in Black* (1997) and *Spanglish* (2004) demonstrate the tendency to use immigrant-adoption³⁴ of settler-American customs as a central theme. In each of these examples, too, westward movement is an active element in the dramas and “freedom” is embodied by this process. It might be said, moreover, that this liberty of travel has a concomitant cultural relation: the employment of settler-cultural forays establishes the character’s entitlement to move within the space itself.
- 38 Movement is also sometimes restricted, moreover, in settler-American cultural imaging; this occurs when a character resists the prescribed norms of American behavior or falls short of achieving political settler-American status. This is the case in the 2008 motion picture *The Visitor*, directed by Thomas McCarthy. In this film,

protagonist Walter Vale, a professor at Connecticut College, finds an apartment he maintains in New York city occupied by an undocumented couple—Tarek, a man from Syria, and Zainab, a woman from Senegal. Walter initially expels the squatters but later, upon consideration of their innocence in the matter, invites them to stay until they find a new residence. Tarek and Walter become friends; they share an interest in playing drums and African cuisine. When Tarek is jailed due to immigration status, Walter hires a lawyer to resolve the matter. Tarek is ultimately deported, however, and presumably never sees Zainab or Walter again. While the film addresses some inherent ironies of United States' social rhetoric and shortcomings of its political statues, the context is anchored in the tradeoff of opulence and privilege for paradoxical restrictions of rights that affect few. This undertext is reiterated by the final scene, which is not Walter filing a complaint at the justice office or with his immigration attorney, but playing drums in the subway.

- 39 The concept of collective identity and the associated appropriations of rights and perceived entitlements—such as permission to be present in the United States—are indeed complex issues, and it is also true that postnational (or perhaps a more accurate term, null-national) perspectives, especially in literary canons, have yet to establish definitive footholds. Transnational inquiry—a term coined by Randolph Bourne³⁵—is a refreshing exception. The notion of a multilateral collective identity that incorporates components from several cultural sources is result of shifting migration patterns due to, among other factors, technologies that ease contact, movement, and communication between distant locations and peoples. While for millennia migrations tended to be one-way and one-time movements, more recently migrations include ongoing interchanges between multiple social spaces; in some sense these events have rendered collective identity, as it relates to the nation/nation-state, blurry—if not obsolete. However, the cultural academies that often examine Hemingway and Cormac McCarthy, for instance, tend to ignore this polycultural dimension in their work. (In all of Hemingway's novels, like McCarthy's *Trilogy*, protagonists have social ties to a non-native community.) Critics tend instead to rely on terms like “American” or “Mexican” or “Spanish” (employed as separate entities), and thus concomitant categorical placement of author and work into one construct or the other, while possibly none of these is a proper fit.³⁶
- 40 If we initiate after-national grouping, who might decide how a civic body should be organized? This is an issue which would of course weigh significantly on limits and avenues of cultural study. In a democratic society, we might contend a best-case social and cultural organization would be *descriptive* of cultural, linguistic, and traditional tendencies of the region's demographic—not prescriptive concepts formed by reductive historic creation. (The settler-American identity frequently fails at this task, as the construct often has little in common with regional populations, especially in urban areas.) Defining regions, then, becomes a principal and problematic undertaking. The internet and its apparent aperture of information have already modified traditional concepts of space. However, even the broadest and ostensibly most-liberating technologies—advances that appear to work in public interest—currently have tight restrictions. Search engines such as Google, for example, regularly fail to list information from blogs and other non-commercially-generated content in favor of more “relevant” material. As the determiners of relevancy are significantly influenced by commercial and governmental interests (Google is, of course, for-profit entity that regularly passes query requests to government sources), the perennial canonic control

of civic access to extra-systemic modes of thought, at least at the present time, remain nearly as intact as ever.³⁷ Due to these realities, in many senses, non-national modes of belonging have remained sidelined, and in spite of many shortcomings, and in some ways obsolete status in contemporary social paradigms, the settler-American notion of proprietorship and the cultural hegemony over residents of the American space remain embedded components of the collective consciousness.

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NOTES

1. For a survey of the academic work of these scholars on the formation of national identity, see *Nationalism* (1994) edited by John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith.
2. This is not universally true. Puerto Rico is a notable exception as the concept of "Puerto Rican-American" is nearly absent from sociopolitical dialogs.

3. See Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent* (1988).
4. See Rodney Bruce Hall's *National Collective Identity: Social Constructs and International Systems* (1999) and Magnette's *Citizenship: The History of an Idea* (2005).
5. The US Department of Defense classifies nonviolent protests as "low-level terrorism" (Osborne "Pentagon Exam Calls Protests 'Low-Level Terrorism'" 1); Playwright Howard Zinn has been arrested 9 times in passive demonstrations (*Conversations with History*); the FBI labeled Martin Luther King "the most dangerous negro [in US]" in 1963 ("The Most Dangerous Negro"); the F.B.I. had surveillance on W.E.B. Du Bois until he was 95 years of age (Gabbidon 53); US government refused to denounce Pat Robertson for proposing assassination of Hugo Chávez ("US Dismisses call for Chavez's Killing").
6. While in 2009 Barack Obama has made predictions for the Superbowl and *March Madness*, and might someday throw a pitch at a baseball game, he will not do the same for Chunkey or Pasuckuakohowog events; governmental holidays celebrate Columbus and Washington not Tecumseh, Metacomet, or Sacco and Vanzetti; codified laws on race (like miscegenation regulation until 1967) and religion (such as decrees for governmental breaks at Christmas but not Ramadan) structure popular behavior through governmental regulation.
7. In this sense, as many scholars have noted, the nation-state or nation itself, is dependent upon mass communicative structures that indicate membership or characteristics of those whom the receptors of symbols will never meet. Print-media, then, is a foundational component of collective identity, and the emergence of collectivity itself as a social grouping is coupled with the rise of communicative technology (see Benedict Anderson's discussion of the printing press in *Imagined Communities* 37-45).
8. See Weber 498-501.
9. For discussions on social engineerings, see *How the States got their Shapes* (2008) by Mark Stein, *Linguistic Engineering: Language and Politics in Mao's China* (2004) by Fengyuan Ji, and *Global Governmentality: Governing International Spaces* (2004) by Wendy Larner and William Walters.
10. For more, see "Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture," by Joanne Nagel, in *Social Problems* Vol. 41, No. 1. (1994) 152-176.
11. By 1800 more souls arrived to America from Africa than any other continent (*Slavery and the Making of America* part 1).
12. Native communities eventually (in 1924) received offers of US citizenship—an invitation to be part of the collective—in exchange for assimilation. "Only a Native who had come close to [...] 'civilized life' by abandoning his own culture could become an American citizen" (Hoxie, Mancall and Merrell 315).
13. See *Roman Social History* (2002) by Susan Treggiari 48-70.
14. See *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (2005) 18-54 by Amy S. Greenberg.
15. This phenomenon also occurred in Spain during the Reconquest, and for this reason, many towns and cities there include "de la torre" or "de la frontera" as naming suffixes.
16. Moreover, with these new paradigms, the society appears organic, "more democratic, ever more immanent to the social field, distributed throughout the brains and bodies of the citizens" (Hardt and Negri *Empire* 23).
17. Puerto Rico, for example, is subject to metropolitan cultural submission without statehood status.
18. Some notable visual projections of this image include dozens of government postage stamps; *American Progress* (1872) by John Gast; *Western Course of the Empire Takes its Way* (1861) by Emanuel Leutze; and *The Promised Land* (1850) by William Jewett. In music, this effort was manifest in Katherine Lee Bates's *America the Beautiful* (1910) and *Streets of Laredo* (anonymous; late 19th century).
19. Paul Magnette and Katya Long observe that citizenship defines which residents of the same space are to be "excluded from the civic body" (7).

20. Roosevelt believed that Native Americans, regardless of language, had no claims to land they inhabited.
21. The test requires applicants “to give up loyalty to other countries.”
22. For this and other reasons, in Spanish, this conflict is known not as the “Mexican-American War,” but “The First North American Invasion of Mexico.”
23. In Nebraska, South Dakota, Wyoming, and Montana.
24. Current US passports, for example, have eleven representations of settlers, four landscapes, one Native American image, and one portrayal of outer space.
25. Massachusetts’ “Plimoth Plantation,” for example, has a European name; its Native American exhibit is smaller, has fewer employees, and receives less monetary expenditure than settler re-enactments.
26. Today the Vanderbilt, Carnegie, and Forbes families enjoy extraordinary wealth, a prosperity their ancestors acquired in part through use of slave-labor to construct railroads. The descendents of the laborers are also traceable, and also almost equally poor.
27. See *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media*, 1992,(2:17:25)
28. For Native American literature parallels, see Robert M. Nelson’s *The Function of Landscape in Native American Fiction* (1993) and from P. Jane Hafen’s “Indigenous People and Place” in *A Companion to the Regional Literatures of America*. Ed. Charles L. Crow (2003).
29. Adlai Stevenson’s identification of the American continent with a place that symbolizes freedom and individual values is redolent with the ideology of the American frontier. For the classic account of the importance of this topic, see Frederick J. Turner’s *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (1893). Equally important, particularly because it provides a revisionist view of the traditional concept of the frontier, is Richard Slotkin’s trilogy *Regeneration through Violence. The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (1973), *The Fatal Environment: the Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (1985), and *Gunfighter Nation. The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (1992).
30. The canon has often associated travel with male characters and authors like the ones cited here, but women writers and their characters (e.g. Ellen Montgomery in Susan Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World*, or Eliza Harris in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*) have also demonstrated movement motifs. For an examination of women and travel in American fiction, see Marilyn C. Wesley’s *Secret Journeys: The Trope of Women’s Travel in American Literature* (1998).
31. Hemingway, a man who many critics place within canons of American Literature, also employs settler-American bilingual protagonists, but these characters are set in foreign countries.
32. Cole plans to return to the United States in order live there with Magdalena, though both perish in Mexico before this is possible.
33. In *All the Pretty Horses* that John Grady’s father mentions that his John Grady’s mother lived three years in San Diego, California, though no episodes occur there.
34. Interpreting aliens as immigrants in *Men in Black*.
35. See “Trans-National America,” from *Atlantic Monthly*, 118; July 1916, 86-9.
36. This has also been the case of George Santayana, Sandra Cisneros, Joseph Conrad, and many others.
37. Wikipedia, too, has strict controls on divisive topics, and surely, large corporations and political offices have the financial clout to employ staff members exclusively to manage their virtual image on such public-accessed internet sources.